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Nestlé recalls baby formula in 35 countries; India unaffected

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Australia wins Ashes series 4-1 by 5 wickets

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Homes demolished in North B'luru again

Govt claims BDA land was encroached near Thanisandra; Residents say they bought the land

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

While much of the City was still asleep, residents of Shivaram Karanth (SRK) Nagar near Thanisandra woke up on Thursday to bulldozers tearing down homes many had lived in for over two decades. Authorities claimed the properties were all encroachments.

The demolition, carried out in the early hours, left families scrambling, as beds, utensils, clothes and household items were thrown onto the road. Children were seen sitting amid the rubble of what were once their homes, as tense scenes unfolded in SRK Nagar in North Bengaluru area, with women and the elderly crying and pleading with officials.

Residents said they were informed on the spot that the land fell under the jurisdiction of the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and not Greater Bengaluru Authority (earlier BBMP). Many claimed they possessed valid documents, including sale deeds and e-Khata certificates, Cauvery water connections and electricity connections, and had been regularly paying property taxes. Several alleged that no prior notice was issued before the demolition.

"I bought this house just three months ago. I have all the original documents and paid Rs 3.9 lakh as stamp duty. If this is BDA land, why did the government take the money and give us water and electricity connections?" a woman told **Salar News**, adding, "We were about to leave for work. Where will I go now with my small children?"

Another resident alleged selective action by the authorities, saying, "The government only uses its power against the poor and minorities."

A woman, sobbing and clutching her house papers, said she begged the police to stop the demolition. "They did not listen. No MLA or leader came here," she told Salar News.

Another elderly man said officials arrived at 6.15am, forced families and children out of their homes, and demolished the houses without notice, even though he had all the papers.

Another young man told Salar News that his family had sold land elsewhere and borrowed money to buy the house, only to be told to leave despite holding documents.

The drive comes days after a similar demolition drive in Kogilu's Fakir Colony and Wasim Layout on 22 December, when nearly 400 families were rendered homeless in a pre-dawn demolition carried out without written notice, triggering widespread outrage. *—Salar News*

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Children sit amid the rubble as bulldozers raze homes in SRK, Bengaluru, on Thursday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BANGLADESH SUSPENDS VISA SERVICE IN INDIA

DHAKA, 8 JAN

Bangladesh's interim government on Thursday said it had asked its key missions in India, including in New Delhi, to suspend visa services over security concerns.

Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain told a media briefing at his office that Bangladesh had also sought the reversal of a recently imposed visa bond requirement by the United States.

"What I have done is that I have asked our three missions (in India) to keep their visa sections closed for the time being. It's a security issue," Hossain said.

The adviser's comments came after Bangladesh's Deputy High Commission in Kolkata, overnight, restricted visa services after identical moves in New Delhi and Agartala, keeping business and work visas beyond the purview of the restriction.

Bangladesh has diplomatic missions in Mumbai and Chennai as well, where the visa services remained operative.

India had earlier imposed restrictions on visas for Bangladeshi nationals after August 5, 2024, citing security concerns.

Bangladesh ties with New Delhi have remained strained ever since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime was ousted following a violent student-led street protest in July-August 2024. *—PTI*

500% tariffs on India? Trump backs bill against Russian oil

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, 8 JAN

India came under renewed pressure from the United States on Thursday after President Donald Trump backed legislation proposing 500 per cent tariffs on countries buying Russian oil and confirmed Washington's withdrawal from the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA).

The moves come ahead of the arrival in New Delhi this weekend of U.S. ambassador-designate Sergio Gor, who said in September that ending India's imports of Russian oil was a "top priority" for Washington.

Senator Lindsey Graham said he had a "very productive meeting" with Trump at the White House on Wednesday, during which the President approved moving forward with the long-pending Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025. Introduced by Graham and Senator Richard Blumenthal.

Describing the legislation as giving Trump "tremendous leverage" to curb Moscow's energy revenues, Graham said it could be brought to a vote "as early as next week" and would enjoy strong bipartisan support. He added that tariffs on countries such as China, India and Brazil would be the "ultimate hammer" to help end the war in Ukraine. Trump has already imposed steep tariffs on India, including 25 per cent levies linked to its Russian energy purchases, pushing overall duties to as high as 50 per cent in some sectors. Separately, the US confirmed it would exit the ISA, dealing a setback to India's clean energy diplomacy. Meanwhile, Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra met House Speaker Mike Johnson on Capitol Hill. *—PTI*

K'taka Cabinet passes resolution to challenge G RAM G in court

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said the state cabinet on Thursday unanimously decided not to accept the recently enacted G RAM G Act, which replaces the MGNREGA. The cabinet will challenge the Union's enactment through legal action in the court.

The Cabinet said it is challenging the validity of the Act, which it said violates citizens' right to work and livelihood under Article 21. Panchayats' have been disabled from creating their own assets. They also want to go to the Supreme Court., Patil said.

Consulting the Advocate General on legalities, Patil said, "Panchayats have been disabled from creating their own assets. They also want to go to the Supreme Court."

He added that the cabinet has also decided to take the issue to the "people's court" by holding special Gram Sabhas.

The Act hurts the federal structure by excluding states from consultations while expecting them to bear 40 per cent of the cost. In a note, the Cabinet said the Act defeats the spirit of 'Gram Swaraj' as envisioned by Gandhi. "The Act tramples upon the legitimate rights of Panchayats as vested by the Constitution. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar today said that a decision has been taken to hold 2-day special session to discuss the impact of VB G RAM G legislation of the Centre on rural labour force. *—PTI*

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Armed groups exchange fire in Manipur

IMPHAL, 8 JAN

A fight broke out between two armed groups on Thursday in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, officials said.Suspected cadres of the banned Zeliangrong United Front (S Kamson), who went to destroy an alleged illicit poppy farm at Kharam Vaiphei, fought with armed Kuki groups, they said.There is no report of any casualty in the firing, officials said, adding that the firing has stopped. Additional security forces have been rushed to peripheral areas.The sound of firing created tension and panic in the peripheral villages of Imphal West district, which share boundaries with Kangpokpi district and have witnessed major encounters between Kuki and Meitei groups in 2023 and 2024. *— PTI*

Gauri Lankesh's murderer to contest Jalna civic polls

JALNA, 8 JAN

An accused in the sensational murder of journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh is contesting the January 15 Jalna Municipal Corporation polls in Maharashtra as an independent candidate.

Shrikant Pangarkar is in the fray from ward 13, contesting against the BJP and several other parties' candidates, though the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has not fielded a candidate.

Ahead of the November 2024 assembly elections, Pangarkar had joined the Shiv Sena. However, following an outcry, Shinde kept his induction into the party on hold.

Lankesh was shot dead outside her residence in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on 5 September, 2017,. Pangarkar was a member of the Jalna municipal council from the undivided Shiv Sena between 2001 and 2006. He joined the right-wing Hindu Janjagruti Samiti after the Shiv Sena denied him a ticket in 2011.

He was also arrested in August 2018 by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in connection with the seizure of crude bombs and weapons from different parts of the state. *—PTI*

As ED searches I-PAC office in WB, Didi storms in & takes away files

KOLKATA, 8 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted raids at the Kolkata office of political consultancy firm I-PAC and at the residence of its director, Pratik Jain, sparking a dramatic confrontation with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

Banerjee stormed the sites during the searches, alleging that the central agency was attempting to seize sensitive TMC data ahead of the upcoming state assembly elections.

The ED maintained that the raids were part of a money laundering probe linked to an alleged multi-crore coal pilferage scam and accused Banerjee

of obstructing a lawful investigation, claiming she and state police forcibly removed "key evidence." Around ten premises were raided, including four in Delhi, with central paramilitary teams present from 7 am.

Banerjee arrived at Jain's residence in Loudon Street around noon, remaining inside for 20–25 minutes before emerging with a green folder. "They were confiscating my party's documents and hard disks, which have details about our candidates for the assembly polls. I have brought those back," she told reporters. She described the raids as "political vendetta" and accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of misusing constitutional agencies.

I-PAC, founded by strategist Prashant Kishor, manages TMC's political consultancy, IT, and media operations. Banerjee alleged that the ED had taken election strategy documents, SIR data, leaving office tables empty. "If the polls pass and we have to draw up plans afresh, who will be responsible?" she asked. *—PTI*

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Never ordered removal of all dogs from streets: SC

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Supreme Court on Thursday clarified that it had not ordered the removal of all stray dogs, stressing that actions must comply with Animal Birth Control (ABC) rules. A three-judge bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and NV Anjaria noted that dogs may attack people who fear them or have been bitten before

Senior advocates highlighted issues like rodent and monkey infestations in cities. The court suggested regulating stray dogs through sterilisation, vaccination, and re-release in their territories. *— PTI*

PEOPLE'S SCIENTIST

Madhav Gadgil, champion of Western Ghats conservation, no more

PUNE, 8 JAN

Noted ecologist Madhav Gadgil, 83, known for his work on the conservation of Western Ghats, died in Pune after a brief illness.

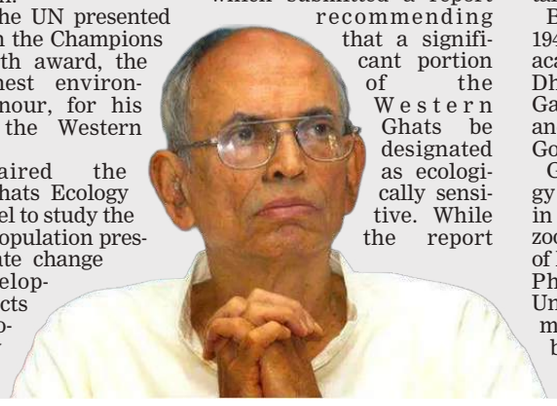
Gadgil breathed his last late on Wednesday night at a hospital in Pune, the sources said.

He played a pioneering role in shaping India's ecological research and conservation policy and was regarded as people's scientists.

Gadgil was the founder of the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, and chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), known as the Gadgil Commission.

In 2024, the UN presented Gadgil with the Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental honour, for his work on the Western Ghats.

He chaired the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel to study the impact of population pressure, climate change and development projects on the ecologically fragile region.



In 2010, Gadgil was appointed chairman of the panel, which submitted a report recommending that a significant portion of the Western Ghats be designated as ecologically sensitive. While the report triggered intense debate, it is widely regarded as a milestone in India's environmental discourse.

Born in Pune on 24 May, 1942, Gadgil hailed from an academic family. His father, Dhananjay Ramchandra Gadgil, was an economist and former director of the Gokhale Institute.

Gadgil graduated in biology from Fergusson College in 1963 and completed PG in zoology from the University of Mumbai in 1965. He took a PhD from Harvard University in 1969 in mathematical ecology and animal behaviour. *— PTI*

SC reserves verdict on judge's plea in burnt cash row

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a plea by Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma challenging the legality of a parliamentary committee probing corruption allegations against him.

A Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and SC Sharma heard arguments, before reserving its decision. Justice Varma has questioned the constitution of the inquiry panel set up after burnt wads of currency notes were allegedly found at his official residence in New Delhi on 14 March. The apex court had agreed on 16 December to hear the plea and issued notices to the Lok Sabha Speaker. After he declined to resign, the report was forwarded to the President for impeachment. *—PTI*

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Wangchuk's speech was to end violence: Wife tells SC

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Gitanjali J Angmo, wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, told the Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday that Wangchuk's speech aimed to end violence, not promote it.

Wangchuk was detained under the National Security Act on 26 September 2025, after violent protests in Ladakh left four dead and 90 injured. The government has accused him of inciting the violence. The law allows preventive detention for up to 12 months, but Angmo said he was denied full grounds to challenge it — a claim denied by the Leh district magistrate.

The video of the speech was not presented to the detaining authority, and while other documents were provided on 29 September 2025, the four videos cited in the detention were excluded, said Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal.

Sibal, appearing for Angmo, played a video of Wangchuk's speech in the SC, showing it appealed for an end to violence by drawing a parallel to Gandhi's response after the Chauri Chaura incident. Sibal said the 28-day delay in providing Wangchuk the grounds of detention was a violation of Article 22. The hearing remained inconclusive and will resume on 12 January. *—PTI*

Cong bought Rs 174cr tractors from Kerala: JD(S)

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

The JD(S) on Thursday alleged that the State government has "sidelined" the Karnataka Electrical Factory to procure transformers from a Kerala-based company worth Rs 174.73 crore. Targeting Energy Minister KJ George, whose roots are in Kerala, the JD(S) accused him of "ignoring the pride of Kannadigas". Despite KEF earning a nationwide reputation over the past eight decades for manufacturing quality transformers, George had "sidelined" it and moved to procure 11,721 power transformers exclusively from Kerala Electrical and Allied Engineering Limited, the party alleged on X. It claimed that George granted an exemption under Section 4(G) of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) Act for the purchase. *—PTI*

1 dead, 17 hurt in Chamarajanagar bus-truck accident

MYSURU, 8 JAN

A KSRTC bus driver killed on the spot, other 17 bus travellers were injured when the bus collided head on against a granite laden truck near Bendaravadi in Chamarajanagar on Wednesday night. According to the police, the deceased has been identified as bus driver Manjunath, 32, resident of Irusavadi of Kollegal taluk. The incident took place when the overspeeding granite slabs laden truck collided head on against the KSRTC bus coming against the truck. The bus was coming from Mysuru to Chamarajanagar , while the granite laden truck was moving towards Mysuru from Chamarajanagar. Upon receiving information, Chamarajanagar Deputy commissioner Roopa inspected the accident spot along with police officials. Chamarajanagar Rural police have registered a case. *—Salar News*

WinZo co-founder moves HC against ED probe

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

Saumya Rathore, co-founder of WinZo Games Pvt Ltd, has filed a plea in the Karnataka High Court against the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) investigation, requesting that the proceedings be moved to Delhi, Bar and Bench reported. Rathore's representative, Senior Advocate Sajan Poovayya, argued that all relevant operationsare based in Delhi. The ED's Advocate Madhu N Rao countered, asserting the agency's pan-India jurisdiction and the necessity of the probe's continuation from Bengaluru, where Rs 800 crores have been attached in the case. Justice M Nagaprasanna scheduled the further hearing for 14 January. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Scorpions to play in B'luru on 26 Apr in India tour

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Scorpions, one Germany's greatest hard rock band known for hits such as 'Wind of Change' and 'Still Loving You', on Thursday announced their much-awaited return to India after nearly two decades, with a show in the City. The band, which was founded in Hanover in 1965 by guitarist Rudolf Schenker, will perform in Shillong on 21 April at JN Stadium, followed by stops at Delhi-NCR on 24 April at HUDA Grounds, Bengaluru on 26 April at NICE Grounds and Mumbai on 30 April at Jio Gardens, BKC as part of their 'Coming Home 2026 tour'. "Sixty years after the band's founding, we're bringing our 'Coming Home' concert to India.," Schenker said in a statement. The tour is produced and promoted by BookMyShow Live. *—PTI*

Govt spent most on ads in National Herald: Reports

BJP launches tirade, claims Cong is looting the State

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

A political storm erupted after a reports claimed that the State government gave the most number of advertisements to the Congress-owned National Herald, despite it having a relatively small footprint in Karnataka.

According to government reports accessed by several media outlets, the State government reportedly spent spent around Rs 1.9 crore on advertisements in the National Herald, while in 2024-25, this amount was Rs 99 lakh.

Notably, in 2024-25, the Congress government in Karnataka spent a total of Rs 1.42 crore on advertisements in national newspapers, of which about 69 per cent went to the National Herald.

Salar could not independently verify the numbers.

The BJP launched scathing attacks on the government.

Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are accused by the ED of money laundering through the party-owned National Herald *PHOTO: PTI*

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said that: "The so-called owner of this newspaper, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, are out on bail in connection with this scam (National Herald disproportionate assets case)."

He claimed that the State government was bribing people on bail.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka said on X that: "While farmers wait for dues, youth struggle for jobs and basic infrastructure cries for funds, Congress is busy converting Karnataka into an ATM to fund its political network."

BJP State President BY Vijayendra said it was "back door funding", claiming that the Congress was illegally channelling money.

However, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar defended party, saying it was natural and "there is nothing wrong with it".

"Any government can give advertisements to any media outlet it feels is doing its work," he told press in response to a question. "We have seen many other states giving ads to Kannada newspapers.

What are they doing? Can we question that?"

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had accused Sonia and Rahul, among others and the private company Young Indian, of conspiracy and money laundering in the National Herald case.

Shivakumar is also implicated in the case. *—Agencies*

IN ILLEGAL LAYOUTS

Cabinet okays giving A-khata for B-khata properties

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

The Karnataka Cabinet approved issuing A-khata to B-khata properties located in illegal layouts coming within the jurisdiction of urban local bodies, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said. The decision applies to buildings, apartments, and flats,

Briefing reporters after a Cabinet meeting on Thursday, Patil said the decision is similar to the one earlier taken for B-khata properties.

He explained that all bonafide properties in layouts approved by competent government bodies are given A-khata, while B-khata properties are in layouts without such approvals.

"The Cabinet has approved granting A-khata to sites and buildings/apartments/flats holding B-khata in layouts created without obtaining approval from the competent authority coming within the jurisdiction of urban local bodies," he said.

Patil said the decision is similar to the one previously taken for B-khata properties here. He said that genuine properties in layouts approved by government bodies are assigned an A-khata, while B-khata properties are located in layouts without such approvals.

B-Khata is a type of property record maintained by the city's municipal corporation for properties that do not fully comply with legal and planning norms.

Although these properties are not entirely legal, owners are still required to pay property taxes, and their details are recorded for tax purposes. A-khatas, by contrast are when the property is legal.

"It's a policy decision. No court has stayed it, so we have gone ahead with it," Patil said. *—Agencies*

LONGEST SERVING CM

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan congratulates Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for becoming the longest-serving CM of Karnataka. Khan wished Siddaramaiah continued strength 'as he carries forward his responsibility to the people' *PHOTO: SALAR*

FIR against 9 for 'disrobing' woman BJP worker

HUBBALLI, 8 JAN

An FIR has been registered against nine people at the Keshwapur Police Station in Hubballi over the alleged assault and partial disrobing of a woman BJP worker. The suspects are Hubballi–Dharwad City Corporation Congress Councillor Suvarna Kalakuntla among others. Charges like attempt to murder, criminal intimidation and rioting have also been invoked.

Based on a complaint by Mariadas, the brother of the BJP worker, Sujatha Handi, the Keshwapur police registered the FIR.

The incident stemmed from a long-standing rivalry between BJP worker Sujatha Handi and Kalakuntla.

Sujatha, who was associated with Kalakuntla, joined the BJP two years ago, after which the animosity grew.

On 5 January, when Sujatha was arrested by the Keshwapur Police, allegations surfaced that women constables had forcibly disrobed her in the police van.

However, the police denied the allegations, stating that the woman had disrobed herself.

A BJP worker was allegedly disrobed by police during her arrest, in Hubballi *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

NCW takes suo motu cognisance

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo motu cognisance of the Hubballi case. The Commission has condemned the incident and issued a letter to the Karnataka Director General of Police (DGP) in the matter. The NCW asked the DGP to register an FIR and conduct a fair, impartial, and time-bound investigation in the case. It also sought a detailed Action Taken Report (ATR) within 5 days.

Meanwhile, the police detained 21 BJP workers, including Hubballi Mayor Jyoti Patil and Deputy Mayor Santosh Chavan, for protesting in front of the Keshwapur Police Station in Hubballi demanding the arrest of a Congress Councillor in connection with the alleged assault.

—Salar News with agencies

JD(S) may merge with BJP soon, quips DKS

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said it appears as if the JD(S) may merge with the BJP soon.

Shivakumar quipped that he had nothing to learn from JD(S) second-in-command HD Kumaraswamy, despite the latter being a Union Minister and former chief minister. Kumaraswamy had criticised the KPCC President for meeting with the Ballari police after the recent clash.

"Looking at Kumaraswamy's attitude, it appears to me that the JD(S) may merge with the BJP soon. It will be good for us (Congress) if the merger happens, as there will be a direct fight between two parties," Shivakumar said at Chamarajapete while inducting JD (S) leader Govindaraj and his supporters into Congress ahead of the local civic body polls. "A contest between two parties is good for State politics."

"There is a lot of confusion between leaders of (BJP and JDS), as they are worried about their own political future with the alliance," he added, saying that many want to join the Congress.

He said the JD(S) is like a "personal property" and doesn't have an ideology.

—Salar News with agencies

Belagavi blast toll hits 8 as all the injured succumb

BELAGAVI, 8 JAN

The death toll from the blast at a sugar factory in Belagavi rose to eight on Thursday as five more workers who were undergoing treatment for severe burn injuries succumbed to their injuries, meaning all the injured have now died.

The incident occurred on Wednesday while repair work was underway on the wall of Compartment No 1 at the Inamdar Sugar Factory in Marakumbi village Bailhongal taluk, when a sudden explosion took place. Hot sugarcane molasses from the boiler splashed onto the workers, burning eight of them.

Three died on Wednesday.

The deceased on Thursday were Bharat Basappa Sarawadi, 27, of Gokak taluk; Manjunath Madivalappa Kajagar, 28, of Bailhongal taluk; Gurunath Bheerappa Tammannavar, 38, of Bagalkot; Manjunath Gopal Teradal, 31, of Athani taluk and Raghavendra Mallappa Giriyal, 36, of Gokak taluk.

Superintendent of Police K Ramarajan told Salar News that three factory officials have been booked. Police are yet to determine the cause.

—Salar News

Cop kills self over 'harassment'

SHIVAMOGGA, 8 JAN

A head police constable died by suicide inside the West Traffic Police Station in Shivamogga on Wednesday night after posting a suicide note in a police WhatsApp group. Mohammed Zakaria, who had returned from a month-long leave three days earlier, was deployed near the bus stand before being found dead. In the note, Zakaria named Head Constable Naseer Ahmed, alleging a year of mental harassment, where the latter publicly humilate him, said SP Nikhil.

Zakaria served in the department for 26 years.

—Salar News

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Govt to finalise count of water bodies

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

Minor Irrigation Minister NS Boseraju directed officials to finalise the exact number of water bodies in the State and take immediate steps to classify them according to their respective departments.

"There is significant confusion regarding the status and ownership of approximately 41,849 water bodies across the State. It is unclear which department owns specific tanks or water bodies," Boseraju said in a release after a meeting with officials from several departments. "Ambiguity is hindering their proper maintenance and protection."

The scientific survey must be conducted to determine and "freeze" the total count of tanks in the State.

Once finalised, the water bodies will be clearly segregated and classified based on departmental jurisdiction—such as Minor Irrigation, Rural Development/Panchayat Raj, or others—to ensure accountability for their maintenance, he said.

He also directed officials to submit a report identifying tanks with less than 30 per cent water storage. Satellite images and advanced technology will be sued during the survey. *—PTI*

HIPPARGI BARRAGE & TUNGABHADRA

Dam gates break open, stressing farmers

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BAGALKOTE/KOPPAL, 8 JAN

Heavy water pressure in the Krishna River broke the 22nd gate's plate of the Hippargi Barrage in the Bagalkot district, leaving farmers deeply concerned. Similarly, a huge hole in the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal left farmers worried in Koppal too. The holes lets the water leak out, damaging crops.

The Hippargi Barrage damage released a large quantity of water into the sea, who are currently cultivating paddy.

The dam is part of the Hippargi Barrage Irrigation Project near Hippargi village of Jamkhandi taluk in Bagalkot district.

Koppal farmers said a huge hole has developed in the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal is causing water loss. Raitha Gram Panchayat member Haider Ali said that if the authorities do not address the issue immediately, farmers in the Raichur and Sindhanur will not even have any water to drink.

Hippargi Barrage Gate no 22 collapsed in Koppal's Jamkhandi under water pressure, releasing 0.2 TMC water into the Krishna River *PHOTO: SALAR*

Paddy planting is currently underway, for which water is need. The locals complained that if the canal water does not reach in time, the farmers will be in trouble.

A a chain link was installed on the 18th crust gate of the Tungabadhra. The government plans to replace a total of 33 crust gates,

Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) Praveen Hunashikatti told Salar News, "Hippargi Barrage Gate no 22 has collapsed in Jamkhandi under water pressure, releasing 0.2 TMC water into the Krishna River. Temporary gates are being installed, and the repair work will follow. There is no immediate danger to the public."

District in-charge Minister RB Thimmapur told Salar News that "Officials have been instructed to rectify it immediately. Deputy Commissioners and tahsildars have taken necessary measures to ensure that people living downstream do not face any inconvenience."

The Tungabhadra is a major tributary to the Krishna river. The Hippargi Barrage is to the north of the Left Bank Canal. *—Salar News*

Ballari violence: HM rejects Oppn's plea for CBI probe

BENGALURU, 8 JAN

Home Minister G Parameshwara rejected the Opposition's demand that the investigation into the recent clash Ballari be handed over to the CBI.

One person was killed in the violence between supporters of Ballari Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati BJP MLA G Janardhan Reddy over the instillation of a Valmiki banner on 1 January.

Speaking in the City on Thursday, Parameshwara said that "Our police department has the capability to investigate.... If the situation comes that they are unable to do it, then we can say CBI or other agency. We have already decided in the Cabinet not to give such cases to the CBI. Selectively, we will decide on giving cases to CBI if there is a court order or if the situation demands".

Parameshwara added that he doesn't take Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy's comments seriously. The JD(S) leader had called Parameshwara a "rubber stamp".

"I have been in politics for 38 years and have worked in various portfolios. I have worked with him (Kumaraswamy) too (as his Deputy CM). He knows both my capability and personality," he added.

BANGLADESHI'S WILL BE DEPORTED

Parameshwara said that any Bangladeshi staying in the State illegally will be deported, responding to Opposition claims that that there were several in the Kaggalipura area. *—PTI*

ED, I-PAC move Calcutta High Court over raids

ED claims probe meddling; I-PAC terms searches illegal

KOLKATA, 8 JAN

The standoff over Thursday's Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids at I-PAC offices and director Pratik Jain's residence in Kolkata has taken a legal turn, with both the agency and I-PAC approaching the Calcutta High Court.

The ED sought permission to file a petition alleging interference in its investigation, while I-PAC opposed the searches and questioned their legality. The raids ED said were part of a money laundering probe linked to a 2020 coal smuggling case.

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee accused the agency of confiscating hard disks, mobile phones, laptops, candidate lists, and internal strategy documents. She alleged the operation began around 6am when no one was present and called it a "crime" to transfer party data into ED systems. For Banerjee, the ED action reinforced her long-running campaign charge that central agencies are being deployed to disrupt opposition parties at critical moments of electoral preparation.

"The BJP is the biggest party of thieves," she charged. "Do they think they can capture the state by deleting voters and raiding the IT cell offices of political parties?" she said, asserting that the Centre could not "bulldoze us using money and muscle power".

"This is not law enforcement. The nasty home minister, the naughty home minister, who cannot protect the country and is taking away all my party documents," she said, later adding that the Prime Minister must "control his home minister". Asserting that the TMC is a registered political party that pays income tax regularly, Banerjee said the ED could have sought any legitimate information from the Income Tax Department.

She visited the I-PAC Sector V office around 1pm, bypassing central paramilitary cordons, and accessed the 11th floor via the basement lift, symbolising defiance. She stayed until Jain arrived, leaving around 4.14 pm.

The searches, the ED said, the raids were about coal smuggling syndicate allegedly led by Anup Majhi, alias Lala, accused of illegally excavating coal from Eastern Coalfields leasehold areas in and around Asansol in Paschim Bardhaman district.

According to the ED, a hawala operator linked to the coal smuggling racket facilitated transactions of tens of crores of rupees to Indian PAC Consulting Pvt Ltd. BJP leaders, including Suvendu Adhikari, demanded legal action against Banerjee for interfering with a central probe.

Adhir Ranjan Choudhary of the Congress party alleged that IPAC acts as 'eyes, ears' of the TMC. He also questioned Mamata's 'selective outrage' against ED. Banerjee also announced a protest rally on Friday from Jadavpur 8B bus stand to Hazra Crossing, urging citizens to join the over 5km march against the raids.

The episode has revived memories of February 2019, when Banerjee rushed to the same Loudon Street area during a CBI search of then CP Rajeev Kumar's residence and later staged a dharna in Central Kolkata. —*PTI*

TMC members take out a protest march against the ED's raid, in West Bengal **PHOTO: PTI**

Who is I-PAC chief Pratik Jain?

Pratik Jain is an engineer-turned political consultant who co-founded I-PAC in 2015 with Prashant Kishor, Vinesh Chandel and Rishi Raj Singh.

An IIT Bombay graduate in metallurgical engineering and materials science, Jain interned at Axis Mutual Fund. In 2012 he worked as an analyst at Deloitte, then helped found Citizens for Accountable Governance, which later evolved into I-PAC.

He currently heads the Trinamool Congress IT cell, confirmed by Mamata Banerjee —*PTI*

MOVE FOR OUTSTATION PEOPLE

EC to offer online SIR hearings for WB migrants

KOLKATA, 8 JAN

The Election Commission (EC) has said West Bengal residents working or studying outside the State will no longer be required to physically attend hearings under the SIR of electoral rolls and will be allowed to submit documents online through a soon-to-be-launched portal.

The decision is aimed at addressing the challenges faced by migrant laborers, students, and professionals residing outside the state.

Meanwhile, the poll body expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of some BLOs, alleging that in many instances, they have ignored official instructions and made independent decisions. The EC warned that any deliberate errors by BLOs will lead to legal action, without shifting responsibility onto electoral registration officers (EROs).

The announcement comes as the EC began issuing notices to 9.4 million people on 7 January due to discrepancies in their records.

Meanwhile, the EC also held a meeting with its state chief electoral officers (CEOs) here to discuss the 36 thematic groups to be led by them at The India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management in Delhi from 21-23 January.

Amartya Sen, Md Shami SIR summons routine process: EC

The office of the WB CEO has clarified that SIR hearing summonses to Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, cricketer Mohammed Shami and Bengali actor-turned-TMC MP Dev were part of a routine electoral verification process. —*PTI*

West Bengal man kills self, family alleges SIR stress

A sexagenarian man was found hanging at his home in WB's Uttar Dinajpur on Thursday, with his family claiming that he was under mental stress after receiving a notice for SIR hearing. The deceased has been identified as Bablu Pal.

ECI seeks proof of identity from Goa Cong MP

Congress' Lok Sabha MP from South Goa Viriato Fernandes has alleged that he received a notice from the ECI, asking him to appear before it with documents to prove his identity in order to retain his name in the electoral rolls.

ED conducts raids in six states in govt jobs scam case

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted searches at 15 locations across six states in a money laundering probe linked to a government job scam, officials said. The Patna ED office is investigating an organised gang that sent fraudulent joining letters to job aspirants. Initially thought to target only the Railways, the scam was found to involve over 40 government bodies, including India Post, Income Tax, high courts, RRB, PWD, Delhi Development Authority, and several state departments. The gang used fake emails impersonating official domains and even paid 2–3 months' salaries to some victims to gain trust. Fraudulent placements included RPF personnel, TTEs, and technicians. —*PTI*

Don't want Muslim votes: BJP MLA Pasi in Amethi

AMETHI, 8 JAN

Jagdishpur MLA and senior BJP leader Suresh Pasi sparked controversy after a video surfaced in which he reportedly said he does not seek Muslim votes. In the 20-second clip, Pasi stated he has never visited mosques, will not do so in future, and does not attend Muslims' joys or sorrows, adding that his position is "absolutely clear". The BJP distanced itself, calling his remarks personal and not reflective of the party's ideology. District president Sudhanshu Shukla emphasised the party's commitment to "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas." Opposition parties criticised Pasi, with Congress calling the statement politically motivated, while the Samajwadi Party accused the BJP of fostering communal divisions. Pasi could not be reached for comment. —*PTI*

Assam Cong Secy expelled for breach of party discipline

GUWAHATI, 8 JAN

A joint secretary of the Assam Congress has been expelled from its primary membership for "breach of party discipline" and "unexpected act of violence". Shahnawaz Ahmed, a Congress leader from Barak Valley, was expelled for activities that "damaged the party image", it said in an order. The order said Ahmed was expelled for "grave and unpardonable breach of party discipline, unexpected acts of violence, and creating intense political hatred among party workers".He had allegedly attacked another Congress leader with a sharp weapon earlier this week. —*PTI*

Satheesan visits Syro-Malabar Church headquarter

KOCHI, 8 JAN

LoP in the Kerala Assembly VD Satheesan on Wednesday visited the Syro-Malabar Church headquarters at Kakkanad amid an ongoing synod of bishops, a move that has drawn political attention ahead of the Assembly elections. Church sources said Satheesan met three bishops but did not meet Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil. The synod, which began on 7 January and concludes on 10 January, has brought together over 45 bishops. Satheesan arrived at Mount St Thomas around 9.30pm and held discussions with the bishops for nearly an hour. A church spokesperson confirmed the visit but dismissed reports that he met or dined with the Major Archbishop. Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala defended the visit, saying, "There is nothing wrong with it," and stressed that the meeting was neither secret nor unusual. Meanwhile, Kerala BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar accused UDF ally IUML and Jamaat-e-Islami of indulging in "dangerous politics" by using religion to target the BJP. He announced that Union Minister Shah will visit Kerala on 11 January for election campaign. —*PTI*

Palaniswami meets Shah ahead of polls

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, 8 JAN

AIADMK General Secretary and former Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Thursday said he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi to discuss the prevailing political situation in the state, while firmly ruling out any talks on alliance or seat-sharing.

Speaking to reporters at the New Delhi airport, Palaniswami said the meeting took place on Wednesday night at Shah's residence.

He ruled out the possibility of expelled leaders VK Sasikala and O Panneerselvam being taken back into the AIADMK, reiterating that they have no place in the party under his leadership. He also brushed aside media speculation on the issue, recalling Shah's earlier assurance that he would not interfere in the AIADMK's internal affairs.

On reports about AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran, Palaniswami said talks were on with some parties to strengthen the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and details would be shared once finalised.

The meeting coincided with the Dr Anbumani Ramadoss faction of the PMK joining the AIADMK-led NDA in TN. Palaniswami said efforts were under way to further strengthen the alliance ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls, expected in March–April. —*PTI*

Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan' postponed; new release date awaited

The release of actor-politician Vijay's film 'Jana Nayagan' has been postponed, the makers announced on Wednesday, citing circumstances beyond their control. Production house KVN Productions expressed regret over the delay, saying the decision was not easy and that a new release date would be announced soon. The film was slated for release on 9 January. The postponement comes amid a censor row, with the Madras High Court reserving orders on a plea seeking a CBFC certificate under the UA 16+ category.

OVER 'SHARED PRIORITY'

12 suspended Cong councillors join BJP in Maharashtra

THANE, 8 JAN

Twelve newly elected councillors in the Ambernath Municipal Council, suspended by the Congress for aligning with the BJP after the polls, have formally joined the saffron party.

Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party president Ravindra Chavan announced the development at the BJP office here, asserting the move was driven by a shared commitment to development.

Following the local polls held on 20 December, the BJP joined hands with the Congress, under the banner of 'Ambernath Vikas Aghadi' (AVA) to form the Ambernath Municipal Council (in Thane district) leadership, sidelining ally Shiv Sena, which emerged as the single largest party. The Aghadi also includes Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

The AVA secured a majority of 31 seats in the 60-member local body. Shiv Sena won 27 seats. The BJP secured 14 seats, Congress 12, NCP 4, while 2 independents also won.

On the BJP joining hands with the Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM in the Akot Municipal Council in Akola district, Chavan said a show-cause notice has been issued to their Akot MLA, Prakash Bharsakhale. Meanwhile, the Congress said it had suspended its councillors for a tie-up with the BJP, but the saffron party failed to take action against its own leaders who initiated the alliance, showing its double standards.

Police registered a case of rioting and unlawful assembly against 60 people for allegedly attacking participants in an AIMIM rally here and throwing eggs at the police. —*PTI*

Turbulent times for India & US: Cong on Trump's tariff threat

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Congress on Thursday said India–US relations are passing through "turbulent times", warning that each day presents a "fresh challenge" after US President Donald Trump backed a sanctions bill that could impose tariffs of up to 500 per cent on countries buying Russian oil.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said bilateral ties are witnessing a "new abnormal", despite what he described as appeasing posts by the Prime Minister. He noted that Senator Lindsey Graham is pushing a bill that could impose sweeping sanctions on India for its trade and other ties with Russia.

"To add to India's extreme discomfiture, President Trump continues to shower lavish praise on Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir," Ramesh said, reiterating that "every day is a fresh challenge".

Graham claimed that Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra informed him that New Delhi was reducing its purchases of Russian oil and had sought relief from tariffs.

India imports about 88 per cent of its crude oil. Russian oil accounted for 0.2 per cent of imports until 2021 but surged after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, at one point nearing 40 per cent. In December, Russia remained India's top supplier, though its share fell to under a quarter, with imports dropping to about 1.2 million barrels per day. —*PTI*

TN CM UNVEILS RS 3K PONGAL CASH GIFT

CHENNAI, 8 JAN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday launched the distribution of a Rs 3,000 Pongal cash gift along with special hampers to rice category ration cardholders across the State, enabling families to celebrate the harvest festival.

Stalin personally handed over Rs 3,000, one kg raw rice, one kg sugar, a sugarcane, a dhoti and a saree to beneficiaries at an outlet in Alandur.

The Pongal gift scheme covers 2.22 crore rice category ration cardholders and families residing in Sri Lankan rehabilitation camps. —*PTI*

CPI (M) LEADER MURDER

Seven RSS-BJP activists get lifer

KANNUR, 8 JAN

A court in Thalassery here on Thursday sentenced seven RSS-BJP activists to life imprisonment in connection with the 2008 murder of a CPI(M) local leader.

Additional District and Sessions Court Judge Vimal J found Sumith alias Kuttan, K K Prajesh Babu, B Nidhin, K Sanal, Smijosh, Sajeesh and V Jayesh guilty.

The court acquitted Santhosh Kumar, B Sarath, E K Saneesh and Kunnumprath Ajesh, while the eighth accused, K Ajith, died during the trial.

After hearing the accused, their counsel and the prosecution, the court later awarded life imprisonment to the seven convicts in the afternoon.

The case relates to the murder of CPI(M) local leader Latheesh, who was hacked to death on 31 December, 2008, at Thalayi near Thalassery. His friend was also injured in the attack as part of the political rivalry.

The accused have been charged under multiple IPC sections, including rioting, wrongful restraint, criminal intimidation, conspiracy, murder, and attempt to murder, as well as Sections 3 and 5 of the Explosive Substances Act.

The trial, which began on 7 January, 2020, examined 30 prosecution witnesses, 90 documents and 27 material objects. —*PTI*

WEALTHY BMC POLL CANDIDATES

Ahead of the 15 January Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections, affidavits reveal a steep rise in declared assets of prominent candidates. Around 1,700 contestants are in the fray for 227 wards

- Sachin Padwal (Shiv Sena UBT, Ward 206): Rs 5.4 crore from Rs 65.06 lakh, 700% rise

- Neil Somaiya (BJP, son of Kirit Somaiya): Rs 9.89 crore from Rs 1.99 crore, 400% rise

- Samadhan Sarvankar (Shiv Sena Shinde, second term): Rs 46.59 crore, a 394% jump from Rs 9.43 crore

- Kishori Pednekar (Shiv Sena UBT, Lower Parel, Ward 199): Total assets Rs 5.26 crore, up 226% from Rs 1.61 crore

- Prabhakar Shinde (BJP): Rs 17.63 crore from Rs 17.63 crore

Part of Delhi mosque property razed: Owaisi

11 people, including a juvenile, apprehended so far; 5 accused remanded to police custody

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi alleged that a portion of a Waqf-owned mosque property near Delhi's Turkman Gate was demolished, blaming the Waqf (Amendment) Act and warning that such actions would continue.

Addressing a rally in the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district of Maharashtra ahead of the 15 January civic polls, Owaisi said the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque land was declared Waqf property in a 1970 gazette notification and described the demolition drive as "just the beginning" after the Act's passage.

Calling it a "black law", he alleged it was being used to seize mosques and graveyards and urged voters to oppose parties that supported it.

Owaisi also criticised the Delhi High Court order linked to the anti-encroachment drive, claiming it wrongly decided the title of the mosque property.

Violence erupted during an anti-encroachment drive near Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

He accused the Delhi Waqf Board of failing to pursue legal remedies by not filing a review petition and said the matter would now be taken to the Supreme Court.

Reiterating his political appeal, Owaisi urged voters in Maharashtra to defeat Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, whom he blamed for backing the law.

Violence erupted during a court-ordered anti-encroachment drive near the mosque in the Ramlila Maidan area on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday after social media posts claimed the mosque was being demolished.

Police said five personnel, including the area's station house officer, were injured in stone pelting, forcing the use of tear gas to disperse the crowd.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi clarified that the mosque was not damaged and that around 36,000 square feet of encroached area, including a diagnostic centre, a banquet hall and boundary walls, was cleared. Delhi Police have so far arrested 11 people, including a juvenile.

Five accused were remanded to 13 days of judicial custody on Thursday, while six more were arrested from the Turkman Gate area under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

Police also identified at least 10 social media influencers accused of spreading false claims.

A woman influencer has been summoned for questioning, with officials saying misleading videos and WhatsApp audio messages fuelled panic.

Meanwhile, heavy security and movement restrictions continued in Turkman Gate. However, the heightened security is causing disruption of the daily life as shops remained shut, with residents facing repeated questioning at barricades of the area, and children missing school amid uncertainty.

— PTI

PHOTO: ANI

Hindi writer Gyanranjan dies at age 90 in Jabalpur

JABALPUR, 8 JAN

Gyanranjan, a prominent storyteller and renowned literary figure of the progressive movement of the 1970s, has died at the age of 90 in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. He died of age-related ailments at a private hospital here on 7 January. Gyanranjan, the former editor of 'Pahal', a literary magazine, was born on 21 November, 1936, in the Akola district of the Maharashtra state. After graduating from the Allahabad University, he served as professor of Hindi at GS College for 34 years. In 2013, the Jabalpur University conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. Gyanranjan wrote several short story collections, among which 'Kabadkhana' is notable. He was a recipient of several awards.—*PTI*

Prosecution calls actor Dileep's acquittal untenable

KOCHI, 8 JAN

The prosecution in the 2017 actor assault case has termed the trial court judgement acquitting Malayalam film star Dileep and three others as "unsustainable". The report filed by special public prosecutor V Aja Kumar and submitted to the Director General of Prosecution for filing an appeal against the judgment of the Ernakulam District Principal Sessions Court criticised the acquittal of the accused and 20 years of imprisonment awarded to six convicted persons. The prosecution said that the trial court applied double standards of evaluation of evidence adduced by it. The trial court rejected the evidence on flimsy and non-judicious grounds. It said. The prosecution termed the sentence given to the convicted as meagre. —*PTI*

Kerala ATS detains man over ISIS posts on social media

KOCHI, 8 JAN

Kerala anti-terrorist squad (ATS) has taken a man into custody for allegedly sharing posts related to the terror outfit ISIS on social media upon his arrival from a Gulf country. Aadhil of Thekkeveetil, Mulavoor in Muvattupuzha was arrested at the Thiruvananthapuram airport on Wednesday. A lookout notice had been issued by the ATS which was investigating the sharing of ISIS-related content on social media platforms. He was intercepted by immigration authorities, who then informed the ATS. Officials said Aadhil is being interrogated, after which further steps will be decided. His mobile phone and other electronic gadgets are being examined by the ATS team, officials added. —*PTI*

IAS officer accused of caste abuse in UP, probe on

BAHRAICH, 8 JAN

Three home guards deployed on security duty have accused sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) in Mahsi tehsil, Alok Prasad of casteist slurs, physical harassment and issuing threats to their lives. Prasad denied all allegations, calling them "baseless". The home guards, Rajaram Shukla, Ramakant Mishra and Ram Kumar Tiwari, all from the Brahmin community, submitted written complaints to their senior officials and the Chief Minister, seeking strict action in the matter. The incident occurred on Wednesday when a person with disability was produced before the SDM during duty hours. He then abused them with casteist remarks. They also claimed of being made to perform continuous duty ranging from 24 to 48 hours. —*PTI*

If VP can act as Prez, why not RS Dy as Chair: SC

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Supreme Court on Thursday said if the vice president can exercise the functions of the president in the absence of the president, then why cannot the Rajya Sabha deputy chairman exercise the functions of the chairman in the absence of the chairman, while hearing Justice Yashwant Varma's plea.

The bench rejected the argument that the deputy chairman lacked authority under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, to accept or reject an impeachment motion.

Senior advocates Rohatgi and Luthra argued that only the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha chairman are empowered under the Act, and that Article 91 of the Constitution cannot extend discretionary powers to the deputy chairman.

They contended that the matter could have waited until a new chairman was appointed, noting that the then vice president and chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar had resigned before deputy chairman Harivansh rejected the motion.

Rejecting the submission, Justice Datta said, "The Constitution does not work in a vacuum," adding that the country "has to move on".

He observed that if the vice president can sign warrants of judicial appointments as acting president, the deputy chairman can act in the chairman's absence.

The court noted that a restrictive interpretation would render the statute unworkable. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said such an interpretation would defeat the object of the law and stall timelines for committees. The bench sought submissions Monday. — *PTI*

SC defers hearing pleas challenging SIR to 13 Jan

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Supreme Court on Thursday deferred to 13 January the final hearing on petitions challenging the Election Commission's decision to conduct a Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in several states, including Bihar. A bench headed by CJI Surya Kant said the proceedings would resume on Tuesday. Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the poll panel, is expected to continue his submissions. Earlier, the EC told the apex court it has the power and constitutional duty to carry out the exercise to ensure that no foreigners are enrolled as voters. —*PTI*

SEWAGE-MIXING CONCERNS

Several fall ill in Noida after drinking 'contaminated' water

NOIDA, 8 JAN

Several residents of Greater Noida's Delta 1 Sector fell ill after allegedly consuming contaminated tap water, triggering complaints of sewage mixing and inspections by authorities.

Residents reported vomiting, fever, stomachache and loose motions after using tap water on Tuesday and Wednesday. Rishipal Bhati, a resident and former president of the local residents' welfare association, said sewage overflow and pipeline leakages, particularly in C Block, caused the problem.

"Around six to seven families fell ill after consuming contaminated water," he said.

Residents alleged sewage from blocked lines mixed with broken pipelines and reached household taps, while water leakage was described as a recurring issue in the sector.

The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) denied sewage mixing. A senior official said water samples tested clean, adding that a faulty connection in one house and a leak in another were fixed immediately. GNIDA said its team inspected affected homes on Wednesday and collected fresh samples for testing after supply resumed. CEO NG Ravi Kumar ordered random water testing.

Meanwhile, the health department held a free medical camp in Delta 1 on Wednesday, examining 23 people and treating seven. —*PTI*

Officials during an inspection after several residents fell ill following alleged drinking of contaminated water, in Greater Noida **PHOTO: PTI**

Eco activist Singh's firm calls ED claims 'baseless'

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Satat Sampada, the climate action organisation co-founded by Harjeet Singh and his wife Jyoti Awasthi, has rejected Enforcement Directorate (ED) allegations against it and its founders, calling them "baseless, biased and misleading."

On 5 January, the ED searched the couple's home and the company office under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), investigating alleged misuse of Rs 6 crore received from abroad and purported narrative-building for foreign influencer groups. Singh was also arrested by the UP excise department over allegations of storing liquor beyond permissible limits, and was granted bail by a Ghaziabad court on 6 January.

Satat Sampada stated the company was founded using the couple's personal savings and loans, including by mortgaging their only home, and focuses on environmental consultancy, climate change, and disaster response. Singh has traveled internationally for two decades, representing India's climate initiatives and renewable energy progress at conferences and policy forums.

The ED claimed the company promoted the proposed Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, warning it could pose legal challenges internationally and affect India's energy security. Sampada affirmed full cooperation and offered to provide any additional information required. —*PTI*

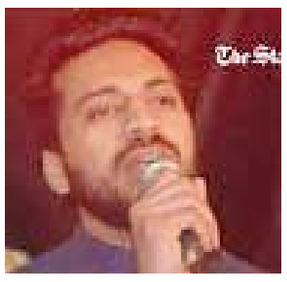
Delhi 2020 riots' fifth accused released

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Delhi court on Thursday issued release orders for Shahdab Ahmed, the fifth accused granted bail by the Supreme Court in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots conspiracy case. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai accepted a bond of Rs 2 lakh with two sureties and ordered his release after Delhi Police verified the documents.

The court noted that Ahmed had complied with all bail conditions imposed by the apex court. Earlier, it had directed police to verify the bond papers. The other four accused granted bail were released from jail on Wednesday.

On Monday, the Supreme Court refused bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam but granted relief to five others, citing "hierarchy of participation" and observing that all accused did not stand on the same footing. A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and NV Anjaria said a prima facie case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was made out against Khalid and Imam.



While granting bail, the apex court imposed 11 conditions, including surrender of passports, travel restrictions, and a bar on influencing witnesses. The matter is under trial.—*PTI*

MANIPUR GANGRAPE CASE: CHARGES FRAMED AGAINST 6 ON 15 COUNTS

GUWAHATI, 8 JAN

The special CBI court in Guwahati has framed charges on 15 counts against six accused in the Manipur case in which three women were stripped naked and two allegedly gangraped during ethnic violence in May 2023.

Special judge Chatra Bhukan Gogoi passed the order on 2 January, holding that a prima facie case exists against all accused based on witness statements and documents.

The charges include gangrape, murder, rioting, promoting enmity between Meiteis and Kukis, assault with intent to disrobe, destruction of dwellings, and offences under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

The court noted that the victims were paraded naked and family members of one victim were killed during the mob attack. The incident surfaced months later after a video went viral. The accused pleaded not guilty and claimed trial. The court directed all six accused to appear on 16 January. — *PTI*

DRIVE TILL 16 JAN

Over 32,000 apply for 1,176 constable job posts in Nagaland

KOHIMA, 8 JAN

The police constable recruitment drive in Nagaland has seen a huge response, with over 32,000 candidates applying for 1,176 posts, officials said on Thursday.

The rally began on Wednesday and is being held simultaneously across multiple districts. It started with document verification, followed by physical standard tests and medical examinations.

Candidates who qualify will appear for physical efficiency tests, including running and endurance events, before a written examination scheduled later. Officials said the process will continue district-wise for several days and conclude on January 16. For the first time, applications were submitted entirely online. Eligibility for constable (general duty) posts was limited to indigenous Naga tribes. Authorities said strict measures ensure transparency, fairness and merit-based selection. Multiple monitoring teams are deployed, and assessments follow prescribed standards. —*PTI*

Police during recruitment drive **PHOTO: X/ YANTHANMICHEAL**

Study estimates 49 lakh typhoid cases in India in '23

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

A study has estimated 49 lakh cases of typhoid fever and 7,850 deaths in India in 2023, with Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka accounting for nearly 30 per cent of the national burden, according to findings published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia.

Researchers found that around six lakh of the 7.3 lakh hospitalisations nationwide were linked to fluoroquinolone resistance, a form of antimicrobial resistance. The three states also recorded the highest rates of resistant cases and deaths among high-burden states.

The study estimated 4.9 million cases and highlighted persistently high fluoroquinolone resistance, exceeding 60 per cent and peaking at 94 per cent in 2017. Resistance to third-generation cephalosporins and azithromycin remained low, while multidrug resistance declined over three decades.

Children aged five to nine showed the highest infection rates, while those under five accounted for most hospitalisations and deaths. The authors identified the three states as priority areas for typhoid control and urgent intervention measures nationwide are needed now. —*PTI*

Cold wave grips states, Delhi records coldest morning

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

A severe cold wave gripped large parts of India on Thursday, with several regions recording the lowest temperatures of the season, the IMD said. Delhi recorded its third coldest morning of winter at 5.8°C, with Palam at 4.8°C, while Rajasthan saw Sikar hit 2.5°C and Jaipur drop to 4.4°C. Dense fog and severe cold day conditions persisted across the State.

Kashmir experienced its coldest night of the season, with Srinagar at –5.1°C, Sonamarg –9.8°C, Gulmarg –9.2°C and Pahalgam –8.6°C.

In Odisha, Similipal National Park recorded 0°C, and Bhubaneswar matched a 74-year-old low of 9.4°C, while several districts faced cold wave conditions, particularly affecting rural areas. —*PTI*

J&K med students' future lost in political whiplash

The order follows protests by Rashtriya Bajrang Dal members demanding revocation of the MBBS admission list of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence in Jammu and Kashmir **PHOTO: PTI**

The National Medical Commission's "abrupt" decision to withdraw its letter of permission to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) in Jammu and Kashmir's Katra, just months after the inaugural session of the college commenced, has left the students and faculty staring at an uncertain future.

While the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) of the National Medical Commission (NMC) cited a failure to meet "minimum standards" following a surprise inspection on 2 January, faculty and students allege that the decision was fuelled by local political pressure rather than academic deficiencies.

The withdrawal follows weeks of protests by the Sangharsh Samiti, a conglomerate of Right-wing organisations backed by the BJP, demanding the cancellation of the current batch's admissions to 42 Muslim students from Kashmir, seven Hindus and one Sikh candidate.

All of them qualified through the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

The conglomerate was lobbying for the college to scrap the current merit-based list and reserve all seats exclusively for Hindu students.

Despite the NMC's claims of non-compliance, faculty members, speaking on the condition of anonymity, defended the institution as one of the best in the Union Territory.

"We got the permission after a lot of hard work and investment. We have the best infrastructure and faculty, and whatever is required to run a medical college was in place," a senior faculty member said.

The order issued by the MARB on Tuesday evening said that all students admitted to the college during the counselling for the 2025-26 academic year shall be accommodated in other medical institutions in Jammu and Kashmir as supernumerary seats by the competent authority of the UT administration.

There has been no official communication from the medical college so far.

The faculty members said the NMC findings can be contested point-by-point and "everyone knows what led to the inspection and the subsequent decision, especially in view of the unrest created in the Jammu region".

Another faculty member said that around 150 people left their jobs in government and private sectors and joined the institution, who are now left concerned for their future.

The faculty members also questioned the "unusual haste" of the NMC's decision, arguing that standard administrative protocols were bypassed as the institute should have been served a show-cause notice first, allowing for a formal response and a window for rectification.

"The established procedure involves a reply to a show-cause notice," a faculty member said, adding, "If the response is deemed unsatisfactory, the matter is typically escalated to the Union Health Ministry for a final hearing before such a drastic measure as derecognition is taken."

The faculty member said that being one of the best institutes the NMC's move came as a setback for the medical college.

"We know that the NMC order does not mean that the institute will be forever closed. We are hopeful that the shrine board will work out the next course of action and safeguard the staff and the future of the institution," he said.

Referring to the option of reapplying for the letter of permission, the faculty member said it may not resolve the issue.

"We can apply afresh in response to the notification at any time, but it may not be helpful because the situation could be the same. What is needed is to avert this situation altogether," the faculty member said. "We have two options. One, the Chief Minister issues a no-objection certificate so that admissions are done through Central counselling, allowing students from across the country to join purely on merit, like in the Sharda University in Uttar Pradesh."

The second option, he said, is to seek deemed university status. "We are already running three of the five required faculties – medicine, nursing and social sciences (Gurukul). We need two more, such as allied health sciences and public health specialisation. This can be done under the leadership of the shrine board chairman and may take about a year," he said.

"The college has the potential to be one of the best medical colleges in the country, given its infrastructure and facilities. I have visited many medical colleges in India and abroad, but this one had better infrastructure and faculty compared to the other colleges in J&K," another faculty member said.

Students also expressed distress over the withdrawal of permission, describing the decision as "heartbreaking".

"We secured admission through a competitive exam, and the NMC's decision has come as a shock because we did not expect such a development at the beginning of our course," Bilquis, a student from Budgam, said.

She added that they faced no problems or discrimination based on religion on the campus.

Mahit Srivastava, a student from Udhampur, termed the decision "very unfortunate" and said "it (the protests) served as an example of "axing one's own feet".

Another student said they got admission solely based on merit.

"The facilities were outstanding, which nobody can question. We did not face any trouble inside the campus despite the protests outside by right-wing groups. We were living in harmony. This decision has left us heartbroken," the student said. —PTI

BDA drive flattens homes

Residents of Bengaluru's SRK Nagar near Thanisandra woke up on Thursday to tractors demolishing their homes. Salar News photographer Mohammed Asad captured the devastation

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Maduro arrest to upend US-China bond

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro. Under Maduro, China forged an 'all weather strategic partnership' with Venezuela, becoming the country's largest oil buyer **PHOTO: PTI**

Hours after the US's controversial seizure of Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro this weekend, China's Foreign Ministry stated Beijing was "deeply shocked" by the "blatant use of force against a sovereign state."

The Asian supergiant also appealed to Latin American and Caribbean countries, calling them "good friends and good partners" and assuring that Beijing was willing to work with them and "navigate the changing international landscape with solidarity and coordination."

While criticising the United States for attacking Venezuela, Chinese diplomats have also sought to portray their own country as a responsible global power.

Those remarks are likely to resonate strongly across Latin America. With US President Donald Trump reviving the Monroe Doctrine — a foreign policy stance first articulated over 200 years ago about Washington's supremacy in the Western Hemisphere — the kidnapping of Maduro is seen as a grim warning and a demonstration of US power in the region.

William Yang, a senior Northeast Asia analyst at the International Crisis Group think tank, said Beijing is likely to tap into such concerns to challenge US international standing and to "further deepen its influence among countries across the Global South."

China will also "closely monitor how the US handles the situation in Venezuela in the coming weeks and months," Yang added.

CARACAS TIES SEVERED

Trump's swift seizure of Maduro, the leader of a key Chinese ally in Latin America, could significantly impact the world's second-largest economy.

Under Maduro, China has formed an "all weather strategic partnership" with Venezuela and became the country's largest oil buyer after the US sanctions escalated in 2019.

China has also sold weapons to Venezuela, with deliveries worth USD 615 million just between 2009 and 2019, according to a US estimate. Perhaps most significantly for China, its officials have provided billions in credit to Venezuela, and Caracas is nowhere near paying off its debt.

US-based think tank AidData puts the total Chinese lending to Venezuela at USD 105.5 billion, which includes USD 17 billion to USD 19 billion in outstanding principal from China Development Bank's oil-for-loans program.

Hours before his capture on Saturday, Maduro welcomed a Chinese delegation in what he described as a "pleasant meeting" to reaffirm their political and economic partnership.

But US media has since reported that the Trump administration is insisting that the interim government in Venezuela must sever economic ties with China, Russia, Iran and Cuba. On social media, Trump has stated that Venezuela would deliver between 30 million and 50 million barrels of its oil to the US.

China decried the move as a violation of international law.

"The United States' brazen use of force against Venezuela and its demand for 'America First' when Venezuela disposes of its own oil resources are typical acts of bullying," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a press conference.

SYMBOLIC OUTRAGE

However, analysts caution that China's rhetoric should be taken with a grain of salt.

"China didn't give a hoot about international law," said Elizabeth Freund Larus, adjunct senior fellow at the Pacific Forum, pointing to China's military assertiveness in the South China Sea and its reluctance to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We can translate China's warning to Washington... as 'Beijing needs its money back!' and 'We demand that the US continue Venezuelan oil flows to China!'" Larus added.

Also, despite Beijing's strong language, China has yet to take any action in retaliation for the US attack on Venezuela.

"Beijing is unlikely to go beyond symbolic expressions of disapproval," said Ryan Hass, director of the John L Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution.

Hass also said he did not expect the incident would significantly alter the trajectory of US-China relations.

"America's actions in Venezuela will only play into the US-China relationship if they cause the United States to get distracted and bogged down in a quagmire in Venezuela," he said.

TEMPLATE FOR TAIWAN?

Over the weekend, Chinese social media closely followed Trump's military capture of the Venezuelan leader, with nationalist users commenting that the operation offered a way for China to handle tensions with Taiwan.

Beijing claims Taiwan, a self-governing democracy, as its own territory and has vowed to take over the island by force if necessary.

When asked to comment on the speculation regarding Taiwan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian reiterated Beijing's standard response by saying that the Taiwan controversy is "an internal affair" and "no external forces are positioned to interfere."

But analysts say that the situations in Venezuela and Taiwan are hardly comparable and that Beijing's calculus is unlikely to change.

"Venezuela is a shattered state that was run by a strongman ruler. Taiwan is a vibrant democracy," Hass said. "China could not achieve its aims on Taiwan simply by capturing Taiwan's elected leader."

Elizabeth Freund Larus from the the Pacific Forum says Beijing "has intended to grab Taiwan long before this and will long after."

"China hasn't done it yet because China isn't guaranteed success yet. That day is getting closer, regardless of Trump." *—DW News*

New US food pyramid favours meat and cheese

WASHINGTON, 8 JAN

Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has unveiled new US dietary guidelines promoting whole foods, protein, and healthy fats. The updated food pyramid places red meat, cheese, vegetables, and fruits at the top, marking what Kennedy called the "most significant reset in nutrition policy." The guidelines call for limits on added sugar, an end to the "war on saturated fats," and a reduction in highly processed foods, which contribute to obesity in over 70 per cent of adults. Experts have criticised the emphasis on red meat and saturated fat, citing links to heart disease. Still, the guidelines endorse dairy and minimally processed foods, recommending "real food that nourishes the body" and no added sugar for all children under of 10. *—Agencies*

Nepal Energy Minister resigns amid protests

KATHMANDU, 8 JAN

With mounting questions over his political affiliation, Nepal's Minister for Energy, Physical Infrastructure and Urban Development, Kulman Ghising has resigned. Inducted in the "interim neutral government" in September after the Gen Z protest, Ghising was the third most powerful minister in Sushila Karki's cabinet. The former bureaucrat who led the Nepal Electricity Authority and ended "loadshedding" is regarded as the "power man" of the cabinet. But, his political affiliation was questioned by the interim PM as he had been directing a political party. Ghising, last December had signed a merger agreement with the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) and his party, the Ujyaalo Nepal Party, formed after the Gen Z protest. *— ANI*

PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS

UAE smuggled Yemeni leader to Abu Dhabi: Saudi

DUBAI, 8 JAN

Saudi Arabia alleged on Thursday that the United Arab Emirates smuggled a separatist leader in Yemen, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, wanted for treason, out of the country and flew him to Abu Dhabi. The UAE did not immediately respond to the claim, which intensifies tensions between the nations as their partnership in the Yemen conflict falters. A Saudi military statement claimed al-Zubaidi fled Yemen by boat to Somalia, from where he was flown to Abu Dhabi by UAE officials. The statement from Maj. Gen. Turki al-Malki named a senior Emirati military official as involved in the escape. The STC has not acknowledged the allegation, stating that al-Zubaidi remains in Aden. *— PTI*

Israeli forces shoot dead girl in Gaza amid ceasefire

DEIR A1-BALAH, 8 JAN

A relative said Israeli gunfire on Thursday killed an 11-year-old girl. Hamsa Housou, was killed by Israeli gunfire on Thursday in northern Gaza's Jabaliya area, despite her family having returned to a designated safe zone after a ceasefire nearly three months ago. Housou, who dreamed of becoming a doctor, was hit when shells and shrapnel struck her home. Her uncle said an ambulance was delayed due to a flat tyre, and she was pronounced dead at Shifa Hospital. He criticised the ongoing attacks, questioning the ceasefire's effectiveness, as Falluja neighborhood faces daily shootings. Since the truce began, Gaza's Health Ministry reports at least 424 Palestinians killed. The ceasefire is in its early stages, with efforts continuing to recover the final hostage, Ran Gvili. *— PTI*

TRUMP SEEKS RECORD DEFENCE BUDGET OF $1.5T

Says increase needed for 'dangerous times'

WASHINGTON, 8 JAN

President Donald Trump on Wednesday proposed setting military spending at a record USD 1.5 trillion in 2027, citing "troubled and dangerous times." The 2026 military budget is set at USD 901 billion, making it an increase of over 50 per cent.

"This will allow us to build the Dream Military' that we have long been entitled to and, more importantly, that will keep us SAFE and SECURE, regardless of foe," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

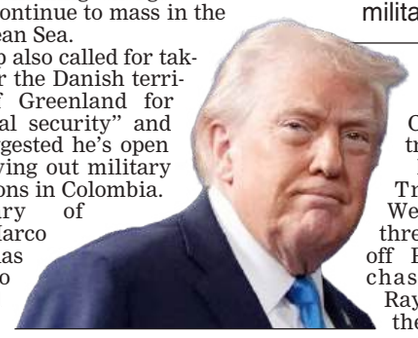
He added that he feels comfortable surging spending on the military because of increased revenue created by his administration through his tariffs.

Trump called for the massive surge in spending days after the US military operation captured Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and brought him out of the country to face drug trafficking charges. US forces continue to mass in the Caribbean Sea.

Trump also called for taking over the Danish territory of Greenland for "national security" and has suggested he's open to carrying out military operations in Colombia. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has also warned that longtime adversary Cuba "is in trouble."

US marine corps soldiers patrolling in the Caribbean Sea near the Venezuela coast *PHOTO: X @SENTDEFENDER*

- President Donald Trump also called for taking over the Danish territory of Greenland for "national security" and has indicated that he is open to carrying out military operations in Colombia if necessary



Meanwhile, Trump on Wednesday also threatened to cut off Pentagon purchases from Raytheon, one of the biggest US defence contractors, if the company did not end the practice of stock buybacks and invest more profits into building out its weapons manufacturing capacity.

"Either Raytheon steps up, and starts investing in more plants and equipment, or they will no longer be doing business with the Department of War," Trump wrote. *—PTI*

Venezuela will purchase only US-made products: Trump

WASHINGTON, 8 JAN

US President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social that Venezuela would purchase only American-made products. Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said that Washington would control Caracas' oil "indefinitely" a break from Trump earlier claiming that US would intervene in Venezuela as a transitional force.

"Venezuela is going to be purchasing only American made products, with the money they receive from our new oil deal," Trump wrote. He said that the purchases would include American agricultural products, medicines, medical devices and equipment to improve the electric grid and energy facilities, amongst other things.

Venezuela said that it was open to trading oil with Washing ton.

In an address to the nation, Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodri guez, "open to energy relations where all parties benefit".

However, it was unclear if Venezuela agreed to buy only American-made goods. Delcy said Caracas will diversify its economic strategy to engage major markets across all continents

PHOTO: X @SENTDEFENDER

100 people were killed and as many injured during the US strikes in Venezuela, says Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello

"71 per cent of Venezuelan exports are concentrated in eight countries, and of those, 25 per cent are destined for the US," she said, noting that there is now a major "stain" on bilateral nations between the two countries.

But the White House insisted that they had control over the interim leaders.

"We obviously have maximum leverage over the interim authorities in Venezuela right now... Their decisions are going to continue to be dictated by the US," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said.

Leavitt added that the interim authorities would begin shipping crude oil to the US "very shortly" as state-owned Petróleos de Venezuela confirmed that it was negotiating with the US government. This comes after the US Department of Energy said it would buy 30 million to 50 million oil barrels from Venezuela, with further sales to continue indefinitely. *—Agencies*

Trump invites Colombian Prez after threatening strikes

Trump abruptly changed his tone on Wednesday about the Colombian President and said he had invited Gustavo Petro to the White House. Trump said they had a friendly phone call and discussed the drug issue. "I appreciated his tone," Trump added. Trump had called Petro a "sick man" who "likes making cocaine," and said military strikes on Colombia "sound good."

SHE WAS A US BORN CITIZEN

ICE agent kills mother of 3 in Minneapolis

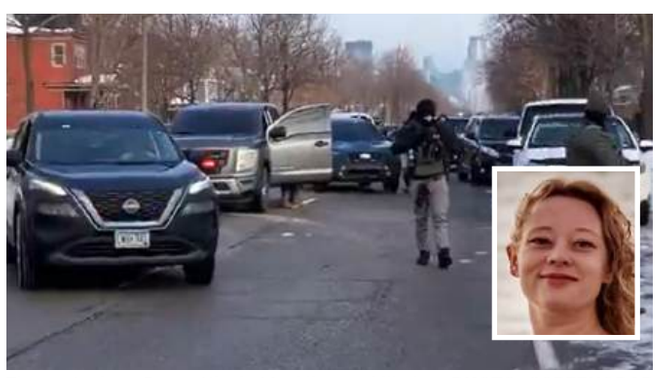
MINNEAPOLIS, 8 JAN

A federal agent shot and killed a Minneapolis motorist, claiming she tried to run over law enforcement officers during an immigration crackdown in the city, authorities said on Wednesday.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer shot the woman in her vehicle in a residential neighbourhood in Minneapolis, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement.

The deceased, Renee Nicole Macklin Good, a 37-year-old mother of three who had recently moved to Minnesota.

She was a US citizen born in Colorado and appears to have never been charged with anything involving law enforcement beyond a traffic ticket. She was also a poet.



The spot where Renee Nicole Macklin was killed *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Video taken by bystanders posted to social media shows an officer approaching her car, demanding she open the door and grabbing the handle. When she begins to pull forward, another ICE officer standing in front of the vehicle pulls his weapon and immediately fires at least two shots into the vehicle. The incident led to protests across the city.

"What they (ICE) are doing is causing chaos," Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said.

> **It is a horrible thing to watch. The woman screaming was, obviously, a professional protestor, and the woman driving the car was very disorderly, obstructing and resisting, who then violently, willfully, and viciously ran over the ICE officer, who seems to have shot her in self defense. Based on the attached clip, it is hard to believe he is alive**
>
> -Donald Trump, US President

"They're ripping families apart. They're sowing chaos .... I wanna tell everybody directly, that is b***sh*t".

However, Vice President Vance said that it was the woman's fault, and backed up the administration in claiming the firing was in self-defence. *—Agencies*

B'desh Air Chief holds talks with Pak CDF Munir

ISLAMABAD, 8 JAN

Bangladesh Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan met Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces Asim Munir on Thursday and discussed defence cooperation.

During the meeting at the General Headquarters, Rawalpindi, matters of mutual interest, regional security dynamics and avenues for enhancing defence and military cooperation were discussed, the Pakistan military said in a statement.

"Both sides underscored the importance of strengthening professional collaboration, training exchanges and defence ties between the Armed Forces of Pakistan and Bangladesh," it said.

Bangladesh's air chief hailed the professionalism of Pakistan's armed forces and appreciated their contributions towards peace and stability.

Munir reiterated Pakistan's commitment to fostering enduring defence relations with Bangladesh, it added.

Bangladesh's air chief also called on Admiral Naveed Ashraf, the Chief of the Naval Staff, at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad.

They discussed the regional security paradigm, and avenues for strengthening defence cooperation. *—PTI*

BNP leader Azizur Musabbir shot dead

DHAKA, 8 JAN

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir was shot dead, and Abu Sufian Masud, General Secretary of the Karwan Bazar Van Association, was injured in a shooting on Wednesday night amid rising concern about political violence and deteriorating law and order situation.

According to the local The Daily Star, around 8:00 pm, assailants on motorcycles opened fire in front of Star Kabab at Karwan Bazar after crossing Farmgate. Musabbir and Abu Sufian were critically injured by the gunshots. Musabbir was first taken to BRB Hospital, where he later died.

Musabbir had reportedly attended a programme near the Super Star Hotel earlier. After the programme ended, Musabbir and Masud were walking along a nearby lane when two attackers fired at them and fled.

Masud, who was injured, was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Inspector Faruq, in charge of the police camp at the hospital, said Masud was shot on his abdomen. *—ANI*

Rubio to meet Denmark officials regarding Greenland

WASHINGTON, 8 JAN

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he plans to meet Danish officials next week after the Trump administration doubled down on its intention to take over Greenland, the Arctic island which is a self-governing territory of Denmark.

President Donald Trump has reiterated that the US needs to control the Greenland to ensure its security due to rising threats from China and Russia in the Arctic.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and his Greenland counterpart, Vivian Motzfeldt, had requested a meeting with Rubio, according to a statement posted Tuesday on the Greenland government's website.

Rubio told US lawmakers that it was the Republican administration's intention to eventually purchase Greenland. *—ANI*

Iran ready to face US threats, says Army Chief

TEHRAN, 8 JAN

Major General Amir Hatami, Chief of the Iranian Army, confronted what Tehran views as hostile rhetoric from abroad, particularly remarks by President Donald Trump that the US is "locked and loaded" to intervene if Iranian forces violently suppress civilian protesters.

Hatami said the "intensification of such rhetoric against the Iranian nation ... will not be left without a response," and emphasised that Iran's armed forces now possess greater readiness than before recent conflicts, during a speech to military academy students.

"If the enemy commits an error, it will face a more decisive response, and we will cut off the hand of any aggressor," he asserted.

The general's warning came amid widespread domestic unrest triggered by economic hardship, inflation and public anger over government policies. *—ANI*

AUSTRALIAN PM ORDERS PROBE INTO ANTI-SEMITISM AFTER BEACH KILLINGS

WELLINGTON, 8 JAN

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a comprehensive inquiry into anti-semitism, weeks after two gunmen opened fire on a Jewish holiday event at Bondi Beach, killing 15 people.

The investigation will be a royal commission, which is the most significant type of independent public inquiry that can be held in Australia. It will be led by former High Court judge Virginia Bell, Albanese told reporters in Canberra on Thursday.

The inquiry will investigate the nature, prevalence and drivers of anti-semitism generally, as well as the circumstances of the Bondi mass shooting, Albanese said. It will also make recommendations for law enforcement, strengthening social cohesion and countering the spread of extremism.

A report is due by 14 December, which will be a year to the day since the shooting during a Hanukkah celebration at the Sydney landmark.

"This was an antisemitic terrorist attack, aimed at Jewish Australians, inspired by ISIS," said Albanese. The surviving suspect, Naveed Akram, 24, faces charges of murder and terrorism. His father, Sajid Akram, was shot dead by police during the attack. *— PTI*

BLOW TO GREEN MOVES

America pulls out from around 60 institutions, UN bodies

UNITED NATIONS/ WASHINGTON, 8 JAN

President Donald Trump has withdrawn the US from over 60 international organisations, including UN bodies and the India-France-led International Solar Alliance, calling the institutions "redundant" and "contrary" to America's interests.

Trump signed the memorandum on Wednesday titled 'Withdrawing the United States from International Organisations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States'.

After signing, Trump said he has determined that it is "contrary" to the interests of the United States to remain a part of the 66 UN and Non-United Nations organisations.

PHOTO: AI

This includes 31 United Nations entities, as well as 35 non-UN organisations "that operate contrary to US national interests, security, economic prosperity, or sovereignty," according to a White House fact sheet issued Wednesday.

Trump directed all executive departments and agencies to take immediate steps to put into effect the withdrawal of the United States from the organisations "as soon as possible".

A UN spokesperson said they have seen the full list of organisations and the United States will provide a comment on Thursday. The United States Ambassador to the UN, Mike Waltz, posted on social media site X that the US will no longer fund or participate in international organisations that do not serve, or in many cases work counter to, American interests." *—PTI*

Rupee falls 7 paise against USD to close at 89.94

MUMBAI, 8 JAN

The rupee fell 7 paise to settle at 89.94 against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed amid various factors, including higher crude oil prices, foreign fund outflows, and a stronger greenback. The apprehension of any further tariffs by the US and weak sentiments at the domestic equity markets further pressured the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 89.96 and traded in the range of 89.73 to 90.13. It eventually settled at 89.94, down 7 paise from its previous close. "India faces big trouble on its exports if the US increases tariffs by even 10 bps, as sentimentally it changes from 'the deal in pipeline' to 'back to square one'. —*PTI*

Granules India gets nod for ADHD drugs

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Granules India Ltd said on Thursday that its US arm, Granules Pharmaceuticals, Inc, has received tentative approval from the US Food and Drug Administration for its generic amphetamine extended-release tablets used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The approval covers an abbreviated new drug application for tablets in strengths of 5mg, 10mg, 15mg and 20mg, which are the generic versions of Dyanavel XR. The USFDA has also determined that the product is eligible for 180-day marketing exclusivity. The company said the development supports its strategy of building a differentiated portfolio of complex generics in the US market. The product has an estimated market size of about USD 41 million.—*PTI*

Rice millers in Odisha call off indefinite strike

BHUBANESWAR, 8 JAN

The All-Odisha Rice Millers' Association on Thursday called off its indefinite strike, which had disrupted paddy procurement since Monday, and resumed cooperation with the state government. The millers had been demanding higher milling charges, revised transport rates and increased custody and maintenance charges for grain stored in their godowns. Association president Mahesh Bansal said the government had accepted one demand by agreeing to pay custody maintenance charges for three months, while the remaining demands were under consideration.General secretary L Deepak Ranjan Das said the agitation was withdrawn ahead of Makar Sankranti on 14 January, an important festival for farmers. Officials said over 14 lakh metric tonnes of paddy have been procured so far this season —*PTI*

Practo expands to US after UAE debut last year

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Health-tech platform Practo on Thursday announced its expansion into the United States with the launch of its care navigation platform in the world's largest healthcare market. The company said it has recorded strong organic uptake since its soft launch in the US last year, listing over 200,000 doctors and achieving an annualised gross merchandise value (GMV) run rate of more than USD 75 million, signaling early traction. Practo Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Shashank ND said the US entry represents more than geographical expansion, showing that healthcare technology developed in India can address complexity, trust and care navigation even in the most advanced systems. To support growth, Practo is expanding its US team to strengthen its on-ground presence and accelerate on-boarding of independent practices, clinics, hospitals and large healthcare chains.—*PTI*

Nestlé recalls baby formula in 35 countries; India unaffected

GURGAON, 8 DEC

Food and drinks giant Nestlé has recalled batches of its SMA infant and follow-on formulas from more than 35 countries after investigations found the presence of cereulide, a toxin that can cause nausea and vomiting. The recall affects products sold across South Africa and Europe. While Nestlé does not publish product-level sales data, infant formula is part of its Nutrition and Health Science division, which accounted for 16.6 per cent of the company's total sales of USD 115.4 billion in 2024.

Nestlé said the voluntary, precautionary recall in some countries does not apply to products distributed by Nestlé India or Ghana. Nestlé India added that it does not import or sell the affected batches, that all infant formula sold in India is manufactured locally, and that the products comply with FSSAI and other applicable regulations.

The Swiss-based conglomerate has faced decades of criticism and consumer boycotts over alleged human rights abuses, with the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) accusing Nestlé of failing to fully comply with UN recommendations on baby food marketing and warning of risks to child health and survival.

Responding to the global recall, Nestlé said no illnesses have been confirmed. Since December, Nestlé has recalled several baby formula products across Europe, including SMA Gold and NAN Optipro variants. Nestlé's shares have fallen more than 3 per cent in the past two sessions, and the company controls nearly a quarter of the USD 92.2 billion global infant nutrition market, according to SkyQuest Technology Group. —*Agencies*

Markets crash nearly 1% over US tariff hike threat

L&T, Tech Mahindra, TCS, Reliance lose ground

MUMBAI, 8 JAN

Sensex and Nifty fell by nearly one per cent on Thursday, due to concerns over potential US tariff hikes amid widespread selling pressure in global markets.

Huge losses in metal, oil & gas, and commodity stocks and foreign fund outflows added to the pressure.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 780.18 points, or 0.92 per cent, to settle at 84,180.96. During the day, it plummeted 851.04 points, or one per cent, to 84,110.10.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 263.90 points or 1.01 per cent to 25,876.85.

Of the 30-Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel and Trent were the biggest losers.

Eternal, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance and BEL gained.

President Trump has backed a sanctions bill that could impose 500 per cent tariffs on countries buying Russian oil.

"Domestic stock markets suffered losses amid renewed concerns over US tariffs and FII outflows," Vinod Nair, the Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, said.

- Sensex and Nifty fell by nearly one per cent on Thursday, due to concerns over potential US tariff hikes amid widespread selling pressure in global markets. Huge losses in metal, oil & gas, and commodity stocks and foreign fund outflows added to the pressure.

The shares of export-oriented textile and shrimp stocks tumbled after Trump approved a Bill that proposes 500 percent tariff on countries doing business with Russia like India.

Gokaldas Exports crashed nearly 13 percent and hit Rs 596.65. The stock later recovered to close 8 percent lower.

KPR Mill shares fell four percent. Pearl Global Industries dropped 8 percent. Apex Frozen Foods shares fell 8 percent, while Avanti Feeds dropped 9 percent —*PTI*

Govt plans to let Chinese firms bid for govt contract

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Finance Ministry plans to scrap the restrictions on Chinese firms bidding for government contracts, sources said, as India tries to revive commercial ties in an environment of eased diplomatic and border tensions, according to Reuters.

The curbs, imposed in 2020 after a clash between the two countries' troops, required Chinese bidders to register with a government committee and obtain political and security clearances.

The measures effectively barred Chinese firms from competing for Indian government contracts that were estimated to be worth USD 700 billion to USD 750 billion.

"Officials are trying to remove the registration requirement for bidders from neighbouring nations," one government source said. The final decision will be made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office, both sources said. The restrictions had a significant impact. Months after they were unveiled, China's state-owned CRRC was disqualified from bidding for a USD 216 million train-manufacturing contract.

The Ministry of Finance's plan to ease curbs followed requests from other government departments that are facing shortages and project delays due to the 2020 restrictions.

"Several ministries have requested exemptions to overcome the constraints that could derail projects," the source said. Soon after India imposed restrictions, the value of new projects awarded to Chinese bidders fell 27 per cent from a year earlier to USD 1.67 billion in 2021, according to a 2024 report from the Observer Research Foundation. —*Agencies*

L&T SECURES ARMY ORDER FOR PINAKA LAUNCHER SYSTEMS

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) on Thursday said it has secured an order from the Indian Army's Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) for the overhaul, upgrade and obsolescence management of the indigenous Pinaka multi-rocket launcher systems.

The program aims to improve the long-term operational availability and modernisation of Pinaka regiments currently in service. It will focus on replacing obsolete components, upgrading critical sub-systems and providing sustained technical support to Army Base Workshops.

Under the initiative, 510 Army Base Workshop (ABW) of the Corps of EME will undertake the overhaul and upgrade of key electronics and systems, drawing on its in-house domain expertise. L&T, as the original equipment manufacturer, will supply critical spares and support the modernisation of sub-systems, shifting maintenance from conventional practices to a structured, life cycle-based framework. Initially, L&T will jointly carry out a pilot overhaul of a Pinaka launcher and battery command post with 510 ABW. —*PTI*

Air India receives its first Dreamliner after privatisation

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Air India has taken delivery of its first Boeing 787-9 aircraft after the airline was privatised nearly four years ago. This is also the first line fit or custom-made Dreamliner for the airline. Generally, line fit refers to an aircraft specifically made for a particular airline.

An official on Thursday said Air India completed the title transfer of the Dreamliner at the Boeing's Everett factory in Seattle on 7 January.

After inspections by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the aircraft, also the first line fit Dreamliner to be purchased by Air India after being acquired by Tatas in January 2022, is expected to arrive in India in the next few days.

The new aircraft has a three-class configuration, economy, premium economy and business class seats.

The last line fit Dreamliner that was acquired by Air India was in October 2017 when the carrier was under government ownership.

The latest aircraft is the airline's first wide-body and 52nd overall delivery of the 220 Boeing jets ordered in 2023.

Air India Express has taken delivery of 51 narrow-body Boeing 737-8s, including its first line fit plane that was inducted in December. After Tatas took over in 2022, Air India placed orders for 350 Airbus and 220 Boeing planes. —*PTI*

2024 $180M BLOCK DEAL

Sebi accuses Bank of America of violating insider trading rules

MUMBAI, 8 DEC

India's market regulator Sebi has accused a Bank of America unit of violating insider trading rules in a March 2024 share sale of Aditya Birla Sun Life Asset Management (ABSL AMC).

In a notice following its investigation, Sebi alleged that the bank's deal team shared unpublished price-sensitive information with its broking, research and Asia-Pacific syndicate teams, which then contacted potential investors, shared valuation reports and other confidential details, and that the bank made false statements during the probe. The notice cited an instance in which the deal team asked the bank's broking arm to share a valuation report on ABSL AMC and its sponsor, the Aditya Birla Group, with Enam Holdings, a potential investor in the USD 177 million share sale. Sebi's notice also detailed the bank's interactions with three investors: HDFC Life, India's second-largest private insurer; Norges Bank, Norway's central bank; and Enam Holdings, an Indian investment firm.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the Sebi notice to the bank. The bank has applied with SEBI to settle the charges without admitting guilt, a source said. The application is under review.

The case first came to light in 2024 via a complaint filed by a whistleblower. —*Agencies*

Silver futures slide by Rs 7,365 in 1 day

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Gold and silver prices declined by Rs 896 and Rs 7,365 in a single day in the futures trade on Thursday, tracking weak global trends as investors booked profits ahead of the key US jobs data.

Analysts said the employment numbers will offer fresh cues on the Federal Reserve's monetary policy outlook.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for February delivery decreased Rs 896 or 0.65 per cent, to Rs 1,37,113 per 10 grams

in a business turnover of 14,957 lots.

Silver futures for the March contract tumbled by Rs 7,365, or 2.94 per cent, to Rs 2,43,240 per kilogram in 12,295 lots.

In the international market, gold futures on the Comex for February delivery slipped by USD 29.70, or 0.67 per cent, to USD 4,432.80 per ounce.

Silver futures for the March contract fell by USD 2.20, or 2.84 per cent, to USD 75.41 per ounce.

Silver overvalued, volatility to continue

Silver entered 2026 after hitting record highs above USD 80/oz before retreating amid sharp volatility. HSBC Global Investment Research said the surge was driven by more by market tightness, strong investment flows and macroeconomic uncertainty. —*PTI*

FRAI urges government to review excise duty on tobacco

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The Federation of Retailer Association of India (FRAI) on Thursday expressed serious concerns over a steep increase in the taxes on legal tobacco products, asking the government for a rethink in the interests of small retailers and to prevent illegal operators from taking over the market.

The demand from the association comes after the Finance Ministry notification of the Chewing Tobacco, Jarda Scented Tobacco and Gutkha Packing Machines (Capacity Determination and Collection of Duty) Rules, 2026, that have imposed an excise duty of Rs 2,050-8,500 per 1,000 sticks, depending on cigarette length, effective 1 February. This development has caused widespread anxiety among small retailers and sellers who depend on tobacco products for a living. —*PTI*

Indian AI startups to work for global leadership: Modi

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Terming global trust in India as its biggest strength, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday emphasised on the need to ensure that Indian artificial intelligence (AI) models are ethical, unbiased, transparent, and based on data privacy principles.

He said that the startups should work towards global leadership and that India can promote affordable and inclusive AI, and frugal innovation globally.

Chairing a roundtable with Indian AI start-ups ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Modi suggested that Indian AI models should be distinct and promote local and indigenous content and regional languages.

He said startups and artificial intelligence entrepreneurs are the co-architects of the country's future.

12 Indian AI start-ups that have qualified for the 'AI for ALL: Global Impact Challenge' summit to be held in February, presented their ideas and work. Through this summit the country will play a major role in the technology sector. India should present a unique AI model that reflects the spirit of 'Made in India, Made for the World', Modi said —*PTI*

LINKEDIN REPORT

84% Indians feel unprepared for jobs

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Almost 84 per cent of professionals feel unprepared to find a new job, amid the rise of AI in the hiring process, rapidly shifting skill requirements for today's jobs and an increasingly competitive job market, says a LinkedIn report.

A significant percentage of Indian professionals are looking for new roles in 2026, but many feel lost in an AI-driven hiring process amid rising competition, uncertainty about role fit and skills gaps.

Applicants for every open role in India have more than doubled since early 2022, intensifying competition and leaving many feeling unprepared.

Moreover, nearly 74 per cent of recruiters said it has become harder over the last year to find qualified talent, the report said.

"AI is now a basic part of how careers are built and how talent is evaluated in India's job market. What professionals need most is a clear understanding of how their skills translate into opportunity and how hiring decisions are made" said Nirajita Banerjee, LinkedIn Career Expert and Senior Managing Editor, LinkedIn India News.

"When used with purpose, AI tools can bridge that gap by helping people identify the roles they're right for, prepare with intent, and focus their learning where it matters most," Banerjee said highlighting the positive aspects of AI.

This year's LinkedIn's India 'Jobs on the Rise' report ranks Prompt Engineer, AI Engineer, and Software Engineer as the top three job roles showing sustained demand for AI and tech talent. —*PTI*

Malaysia Open: Sindhu crushes Japanese Miyazaki in 33 minutes

KUALA LUMPUR, 8 JAN

India's star shuttler PV Sindhu produced an impressive performance on Thursday, defeating a higher-ranked Japanese opponent, Tomoka Miyazaki, to book her spot in the women's singles quarterfinals of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here.

Former world champion Sindhu, returning after a long injury lay-off, defeated the eighth-seeded Miyazaki 21-8, 21-13 in 33 minutes.

However, it was curtains for ace Indian men's player Lakshya Sen and young Ayush Shetty, who both lost at the pre-quarterfinal stage.

Sen, who had broken the three-year jinx of first-round exits in the tournament when he defeated Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh on Wednesday, succumbed in the pre-quarterfinals against Hong Kong-China's Lee Cheuk Yiu 22-22, 15-21 in 53 minutes.

Shetty went down fighting against top seed Shi Yu Qi of China 18-21, 21-18, 12-12 in a 70-minute slugfest.

It was Sindhu, 30, who continued to impress on her comeback by notching her second win against Miyazaki to take her career head-to-head to 2-1 against the Japanese teenager.

Sindhu raced to a 5–1 lead and then reeled off 13 consecutive points to surge to a commanding 18-4 advantage, before comfortably closing out the opening game in no time.

The second game was also largely one-sided, though the 19-year-old Miyazaki briefly stayed in touch, trailing by just a point at 8-9. However, Sindhu drew on her vast experience to pull away with a six-point lead at 17–11 and wrapped up the match with ease.

Sindhu will take on the winner of the pre-quarterfinal game between China's Gao Fang Jie and third-seeded Japanese Akane Yamaguchi.

Lee Jhe-Hue 21-13,21-15 in 35 minutes to also enter the men's doubles pre-quarterfinals. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Tilak undergoes surgery, set to miss NZ T20 series

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Indian batter Tilak Varma has undergone surgery for a groin issue that triggered acute pain and is all set to miss the upcoming T20 International series against New Zealand, besides being in serious doubt for the first couple of matches in next month's T20 World Cup. The 23-year-old was rushed to a hospital after complaining of acute pain in Rajkot, where he is with the Hyderabad team for the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy One-day Championship. The five-match T20 series against New Zealand starts January 21 in Nagpur. "Tilak Varma reported acute Testicular Pain in Rajkot, where he is part of the Hyderabad team for the Vijay Hazare tournament.—*PTI*

Tata Steel Chess: Anand and Nihal share lead

KOLKATA, 8 JAN

Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand recovered from an early setback to register two victories and emerge as joint leader with Nihal Sarin after six rounds of the Tata Steel Chess India Rapid here on Thursday. Rounds four to six produced fighting chess and frequent shifts at the top of the standings in both the Open and Women's sections. Both Anand and Nihal are tied on 4.5 points. In round four, the 56-year-old Anand appeared to be pressing in the middle game before a rook blunder allowed Arjun Erigaisi to turn the tables. The young Indian defended patiently and later capitalised on an endgame error to seal the win. Anand, however, bounced back strongly, picking up full points against Hans Niemann and Volodar Murzin in the next two rounds to return to the top of the standings.—*PTI*

Takale retires from Dakar Rally due to mechanical failure

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

Indian rally driver Sanjay Takale has withdrawn from the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia after a major mechanical issue forced an early halt. The 57-year-old, competing alongside Maxime Raud of France, retired following an engine-related failure encountered upon arrival at the bivouac after Stage 3. The issue could not be resolved, bringing their run in the Dakar Classic category to a close. The rally got underway from Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, on 3 January. The withdrawal came at a particularly unfortunate stage, as Takale was leading the H3 class at the time.—*PTI*

X/@TOTTENHAM

Tottenham great Martin Chivers dies at age 80

LONDON, 8 JAN

Martin Chivers, the former Tottenham and England striker, has died. He was 80. Chivers' death was confirmed in a statement by Spurs on Wednesday. The Premier League club did not state the cause of death. "It is with immense sadness that we announce the passing of our legendary former striker," Spurs posted on X, going on to describe him as "one of the all-time greats." Chivers is fourth on Tottenham's all-time scoring list with 174 goals in 367 appearances. He is behind only Harry Kane, Jimmy Greaves, and Bobby Smith on that list. He joined the London club in 1968, winning two English League Cups and the UEFA Cup.—*PTI*

Australia wins Ashes series 4-1 by 5 wickets

England's players face review after a lopsided Ashes loss

SYDNEY, 8 JAN

Mitchell Starc took 31 wickets. Travis Head posted three centuries and tallied 629 runs. Alex Carey completed 28 dismissals.The bowling, batting, and fielding performances feature highly on the all-time lists for Aussies in the Ashes, underscoring Australia's dominance in the 4-1 series win that was completed on Day 5 of the fifth test with a five-wicketwin in Sydney."Yeah, it has been magnificent," Steve Smith, Australia's stand-in captain for four of the five tests in the absence of Pat Cummins, said of the individual contributions.

"I think everyone's stood up at different times. (Starc, Head, and Carey) were obviously huge standouts, but other guys stood up at different times throughout the series and, you know, that's what makes a good team."The Australians bowled England out for 342 on the fifth morning of the series finale and, chasing 160 for victory, finished 161-5 with Carey hitting the winning runs and Cameron Green unbeaten on 22. Usman Khawaja was sent into retirement with a guard of honor and a standing ovation.

Australia's captain Steve Smith (2nd L) takes a selfie with team mates as they celebrate with the Waterford Crystal Ashes Trophy at the end of the fifth Ashes cricket Test between Australia and England **PHOTO: PTI**

England's players and management are undergoing a performance review following the 4-1 Ashes series defeat in Australia, with England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Richard Gould vowing to "implement the necessary changes over the coming months." Gould stated England's five-wicket loss in the fifth test on Thursday, highlighting disappointment in the campaign after the squad traveled to Australia with high expectations of ending a long drought Down Under. "You've got to have conviction in your methods," he told the BBC. "You're not against evolution and progress, but you've got to have conviction in what you believe in."It's about nipping and tucking to try and get a better version of your style and your beliefs."

Australia 567 (Head 163, Smith 138, Tongue 3-97) and 161 for 5 (Labuschagne 37, Weatherald 34, Tongue 3-42) beat England 384 (Root 160, Neser 4-60) and 342 (Bethell 154, Webster 3-64, Starc 3-72) by five wickets. —*PTI*

THIRD TOURNAMENT

Kaur's MI, Smriti's RCB, and Jemimah's DC seek WPL title

NAVI MUMBAI, 8 JAN

Still basking in the glory of their maiden ODI World Cup triumph, India's effervescent women cricketers will return to competitive action in the fourth Women's Premier League starting here on Friday, kicking off their build-up to this year's T20 World Cup.

Two-time winners and defending champions Mumbai Indians, led by Harmanpreet Kaur, will face the only other title-winning side in the WPL, Smriti Mandhana's Royal Challengers Bengaluru, in the tournament-opener here at the 'home of Indian women's cricket', the DY Patil Stadium. With G Kamalini at the top, MI could also find themselves facing a selection headache with the available talent. Shabnim Ismail will lead the bowling attack, which also includes Saika Ishaque, who will face the challenge of getting her act together after a tough couple of seasons following an impressive debut in 2023.

With Meg Lanning moving to UP Warriorz, mercurial Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues has taken charge of the Delhi Capitals' outfit, which carries the burden of tripping at the finish line all three times in the finals.

The Capitals have a dangerous squad and one that can go the distance if things fall in place. Marizanne Kapp and Alana King will handle the bowling workload, but Annabel Sutherland's withdrawal has reduced the firepower to some extent.

A lot will hinge on how Mandhana, in the absence of the legendary Ellyse Perry, pulls the RCB side while garnering runs at the top. Mandhana's form is never really a concern, and she will feel confident given the talent base which the 2024 winners have. Australia batter Georgia Voll, all-rounder Grace Harris and South Africa's doughty all-rounder Nadine de Klerk will share the batting responsibilities. Behind the wickets and for the finishing job, RCB have the explosive Richa Ghosh in their ranks. India's Arundhati Reddy, Pooja Vastrakar, and England's Lauren Bell are among the premier seamers for RCB. **Indians vs Royal Challengers Match strats @ 7.30 pm**. —*PTI*

Brook apologises for nightclub incident

SYDNEY, 8 JAN

England's Harry Brook apologis 41i;ed on Thursday for clashing with a nightclub bouncer in October during the tour of New Zealand that preceded the Ashes series that Australia comprehensively won 4-1.

London's Telegraph reported that Brook, the England white-ball captain, was hit by a bouncer after being denied entry to the club in Wellington on Oct. 31, the day before the third and last one-day international against New Zealand.

Brook was fined about 30,000 pounds ($40,300) at the time and given a final warning for his future conduct. He was not stripped of the white-ball captaincy. The incident was revealed after England lost the fifth and final Ashes test by five wickets in Sydney. Brook was also the test vice-captain. "I want to apologize for my actions," Brook said in a statement. "I fully accept that my behavior was wrong and brought embarrassment to both myself and the England team. Representing England is the greatest honor of all, which I take seriously, and I am deep-

VIJAY HAZARE: MP BEAT K'TAKA, REACH QFS

AHMEDABAD, 8 JAN

Little-known left-arm spinner Shivang Kumar delivered a career-best five-wicket haul as Madhya Pradesh registered a comfortable seven-wicket victory over star-studded Karnataka to book a place in the Vijay Hazare Trophy quarterfinals from Group A here on Thursday.

Following the win, Madhya Pradesh -- who finished their group campaign with 20 points from seven games became the second team to secure a place in the VHT knockouts, behind Karnataka (24 points)

The 26-year-old Shivang, featuring in just his third List A match, delivered a standout performance with figures of 5 for 45 in 10 overs. His spell snapped Karnataka's six-match winning streak, as they were bowled out for 207 in 47.4 overs an impressive feat given their dominance in the group this season, led by the prolific Devdutt Padikkal and Mayank.

Karnataka 207 in 47.4 overs (Mayank Agarwal 49, Devdutt Padikkal 35; Shivang Kumar 5/45) lost to Madhya Pradesh 208 for 3 in 23.2 overs (Yash Dubey 40, Venkatesh Iyer 65 not out) by seven wickets. —*PTI*

Mizoram cricketer dies after collapsing during a match

AIZAWL, 8 JAN

A Mizoram cricketer died hours after collapsing during a match on Thursday. The Cricket Association of Mizoram (CAM) said the 38-year-old K. Lalremruata passed away due to a stroke while playing in a second division screening tournament being held at Sihhmui near the State's capital, Aizawl.

"He represented Mizoram twice in the Ranji Trophy and seven times in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. He had also played for several clubs at the local level.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family; may God comfort them as they navigate this great loss," the CAM said in a statement.

Mizoram's Sports and Youth Services Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar mourned Lalremruata's death."He experienced breathing difficulties during the match between his team, the Venghnuai Raiders Cricket Club, and Chawnpui ILMOV Cricket Club.

My heartfelt condolences go out to his bereaved family, friends, and members of the sporting fraternity during this difficult time," he said. —*PTI*

Man City drops more points to dent PL title challenge

MANCHESTER, 8 JAN

Manchester City's Premier League title hopes took another blow after a 1-1 draw with Brighton on Wednesday.

Not even Erling Haaland's 150th goal for the club was enough to stop City from dropping points at home for the second time in as many games and recording a third-straight draw. Kaoru Mitoma's equalizer stopped Pep Guardiola's team from closing the gap to first-place Arsenal to three points.

The City manager blamed missed chances for the latest setback.

"We were expecting goals, but it's not about that; we have to score goals. We could not do it, and we have to accept it," he said.

Aston Villa also missed out on the chance to move within three points of first-place Arsenal after a goalless draw at Crystal Palace. Manchester United's first game since firing Ruben Amorim on Monday ended in a 2-2 draw at relegation-fighting Burnley, and new Chelsea coach Liam Rosenior watched on from the stands as his team was beaten 2-1 by Fulham. —*PTI*

China's Zheng to miss Australian Open 2026

BEIJING, 8 JAN

Zheng Qinwen has withdrawn from this month's Australian Open as she continues to work her way back to full fitness after undergoing elbow surgery, the Olympic champion said on Thursday.

The world number 24, who reached the Melbourne final in 2024, took a break from the sport last year after opting to undergo arthroscopic surgery on her right elbow.

She missed the US Open before returning to action at the China Open in September, where she was forced to retire from her third-round match due to pain in her elbow."-Making this decision has been incredibly difficult for me.

Melbourne is my 'lucky place', where I won my first Grand Slam main draw match and where I had my best experience," China's Zheng said in a statement on Instagram. "I have a special connection to this place, and I was very eager to start my new season at Melbourne Park."The season's opening Grand Slam begins on 18 January. —*PTI*

Svitolina stays on track with another win in Auckland

AUCKLAND, 8 JAN

Top-seeded Elina Svitolina again relied on her "fighting spirit" Thursday, beating wild-card entry Katie Boulter 7-5, 6-4 to reach the quarterfinals of the WTA tournament in Auckland, New Zealand.

Both players struggled with their serves in windy conditions on center court. There were nine service breaks in the match, which the No. 13-ranked Svitolina clinched on her third match point.

"Katie is a great fighter, so I was expecting a tough match," Svitolina said. "She can strike the ball very well, as she did today, and it was not an easy match for us with the wind swirling around."

Svitolina dropped her serve in the third game, immediately broke back, but was broken again in the ninth. She won some exceptional clutch points to break Boulter again and take the first set.

Svitolina broke Boulter in the fourth game of the second set but immediately dropped serve. Both players had to work hard to hold in the sixth and seventh games before a series of three consecutive breaks, which ended with Svitolina's second singles win in 2026.

"It definitely was essential to me to fight for every point and try to find my way through," Svitolina said. —*PTI*

NRAI SUSPENDS HIM

National shooting coach booked for sexual assault

NEW DELHI, 8 JAN

The accused coach Ankush Bhardwaj

A prominent member of India's shooting coaching staff, Ankush Bhardwaj, has been suspended by the national federation after a minor shooter accused him of sexually assaulting her during the National Championships last month.

NRAI (National Rifle Association of India) confirmed that an FIR has been filed against Bhardwaj in Faridabad. Bhardwaj, a resident of Mohali, has been booked under Section 6 of the POCSO Act (aggravated sexual assault) and Section 351(2) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (criminal intimidation). "NRAI has suspended him, and we will issue a show-cause notice," NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia told PTI. "He has been suspended on moral grounds. Now, he has to prove himself innocent. Till the inquiry is not completed, he will not be associated with any coaching activity," he added.

Bhatia said NRAI had recommended Bhardwaj for a place in the 37-strong coaching team after the Paris Olympics in 2024.

"It was on the recommendation of the NRAI that he was appointed by SAI as one of the coaches. It is a case of sexual harassment which happened in Surajkund," said Bhatia. According to the FIR filed by the victim, she was targeted last month during the National Championships at the Karni Singh Range.

The girl, who has been training with Bhardwaj since August last year, stated that she was left traumatised by the incident and spoke up in front of her mother on 1 January after being persistently probed. —*PTI*